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62nd year of publication

How not to toast a tyrant

A dialog dinner for Ahmadinejad

Paul Marshall & Nina Shea

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won't be given a prestigious academic podium this time in New York when he returns to address the United Nations General Assembly on September 23, but neither will he be given the kind of reception befitting a dangerous tyrant. In fact, he will receive another propaganda gift perhaps more valuable than last year's Columbia University forum. Courtesy of new General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto, who is Nicaragua's foreign minister, and a coalition of left-wing American Christian groups, he will be the guest of honor at a private *iftar* dinner to celebrate the end of Ramadan.

The September 25 event at the Grand Hyatt Hotel has all the trappings of a Cold War solidarity event. Joining D'Escoto as hosts are some *companeros* from the former Catholic priest's Sandinista days: The World Council of Churches, the American Friends Service Committee, the Mennonites, and the US section of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Given these hosts' track record of downplaying Communist crimes in Soviet days, Ahmadinejad will, likely without contradiction, portray Iran's government as a progressive third-world champion, defending the world's oppressed, resisting American hegemony, and, by dint of the dinner itself, accommodating of religious pluralism. His well-publicized anti-Semitic rants, Holocaust denial, and threat to wipe Israel off the map will be dismissed as inconsequential by these Christian "peacemakers."

Radical Islamization

This dialog comes the same month that the U.N.'s nuclear agency announced that it has reached a "dead end" with Iran due to Tehran's refusal to cooperate and, moreover, that Iran has made substantial progress in developing its nuclear capability. The gathering sends a reassuring message there is little to fear from Ahmadinejad's government.

But fear is precisely what this government instills at home. Apart from its nuclear ambitions, Iran is intensifying a domestic program of radical Islamization on a scale not seen since the Ayatollah Khomeini's death.

The West is beginning to comprehend some of the horrors of Iran's laws – two women in Tehran are currently due to be stoned to death on allegations of adultery. But not well known is that, simply because of their beliefs, Iranians are imprisoned and killed for apostasy and blasphemy. Since, in theocracies, politics is conflated with religion, these laws crush political dissent as well as religious non-conformity. Their victims are the very people who stand against Iran's agenda of revolutionary Islamization, the underlying impediment to secure peace.

Compulsory death penalty

The interfaith dinner coincides with the Iranian parliament's adoption of a mandatory death penalty for "apostasy." Among its primary targets are the co-religionists of Ahmadinejad's New York hosts, and the Bahai minority. Other targets are

See **Tyrant** *on page 2*

Is the Russian Bear threatening the Ukraine and its Baltic neighbours?

Bert Witvoet

The relationship between the Ukraine and Russia has never been very good, but these days the government in Kiev must wonder whether the invasion of parts of Georgia by Russian troops is an ominous indication of what might happen to the Ukraine and other Baltic countries

International observers believe that the war between Georgia and Russia is really a war between Russia and the United States. The United States has angered Russia by inviting former Soviet bloc countries to join NATO. For Russia the problem is that the United States and NATO have encroached on what was once Russia's sphere of influence.

The Ukraine is vulnerable because it, like Georgia, has a large minority of Russian citizens. Russia used the presence of such a minority as an excuse to invade northern Georgia. It wanted "to protect" these citizens from the dangerous hands of the Georgians. Might not the same excuse work in favour of an invasion of the eastern section of the Ukraine?

A new stage

Political analysts from the West see the invasion of Georgia as a predetermined act of aggression. Russia was waiting for an opportunity, they say. The fact that Western countries recognized the independence of Kosovo whila Russia supported Serbia in its refusal to acknowledge such a break-away helped prepare the way for a "tit-for-tat" action in Georgia. President Putin had predicted that Kosovo's independence would set a precedent for the independence of Abkhazia ad South Ossetia. He made sure the precedence was followed.

A woman watches as a Russian armoured vehicle drives through the village of Dzhava in South Ossetia

The Russian action constituted Moscow's first military aggression against a neighbouring state since the invasion of Afghanistan in 1978. It marks a new chapter in the relationship between the West and Russia. The timing for the invasion was good from a Russian point of view. The United States is over-committed in its military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, making it unlikely for it to send troops into Georgia to help out its ally and friend. Most European countries are too soft to even consider risking its soldiers on behalf of a struggling democracy and ally. Russia itself has been able to beef up its military might ever since oil revenues have strengthened its economy.

A difficult past

So the big question for countries

See **Russian Bear** *on p.2*

How not to toast a tyrant ..continued from p.1

dissident Muslims who, because they criticize the Iranian government, are jailed for supposedly insulting Islam itself. On September 9, the Iranian parliament, by 196 votes for, seven against, and two abstentions, voted to make the death penalty for apostasy compulsory (previously, judges could waive capital punishment). The bill now goes to committee before a second vote and final approval from the ayatollahs on the Guardian Council.

The first victims of the new law may well be Christians. Just last week, two Christian men, Mahmood Matin Azad and Arash Basirat, who had converted from Islam, were charged with apostasy. This follows the arrests last summer of 16 Christians in Isfahan and 10 in Shiraz.

The bill also targets heresy, a charge often used against Baha'is, Iran's largest non-Muslim minority. If passed, it could threaten some 350,000 people with the death penalty. Bahais are already subject to a campaign of repression. Seven leaders were arrested this spring and, on August 3, the Iranian press reported that they "confessed" to running an illegal organization with ties to Israel and other countries in order to undermine the Islamic system. Bahais are excluded from universities and "sensitive" jobs such as "catering at reception halls," "childcare," and "real estate," as well as cultural areas.

Muslims threatened

Most of those prosecuted for apostasy, though, are Muslims. The ministry of intelligence is currently arresting dervishes, but more widespread is the crackdown on reformers who criticize clerical rule. In 2007 three student activists, Ehsan Mansouri, Majid Tavakoli, and Ahmad Ghassaban, were convicted of "insulting Islam." Prominent Shiite dissident Hashem Aghajari was arrested originally for saying "Muslims are not monkeys to blindly follow the clerics." At his trial, he said his punishment was for "the sin of thinking." In 2002, due to international pressure, his death sentence for blasphemy was commuted to five years imprisonment, an option the new law forbids.

Iran's criminalization of apostasy and blasphemy is integral to its ideological arsenal. Peaceful reform becomes ever more remote when Muslim dissenters are silenced. They are the Iranian equivalent of the Sakharovs, Solzhenitsyns, and Sharanskys who gave lie to Soviet propaganda claims. It is no small irony that the courageous Iranians are undercut by some of the same groups who pursued "peace" with the oppressors of that prior generation of human-rights defenders. If Western religious communities want to show solidarity with Iranians, they should do so with the religious minorities and courageous reformers imprisoned by the regime. If Ahmadinejad sincerely wants interfaith dialog, he should start by releasing Azad, Basirat, Bahai leaders and Muslim reformers from prison and dialog with them.

Paul Marshall and Nina Shea are respectively, senior fellow and director of Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, and authors of a forthcoming book on the politics of apostasy.

The Russian Bear . . . continued from p.1

like the Ukraine is: when is the next shoe going to drop? The question carries with it a sense of urgency. The Ukraine has too many painful memories of what Russia has done to this former Soviet satellite.

Few people in the world realize that under Stalin's regime seven million Ukrainians were murdered and two million sent to concentration camps. When this is added to all the other atrocities committed by the Communists, the number of murders comes to at least 30 million, three times more than what Hitler accomplished.

Yet Roosevelt and Churchill, who knew about those numbers, were so determined to ally themselves with "Uncle Joe" that they were willing to overlook his faults. At Yalta, Stalin even boasted to Churchill he had killed over 10 million peasants. Somehow the West's preoccupation with the horrible actions of Nazi Germany against the Jews has removed Communist atrocities from the pages of its collective memory.

Ukrainian writer Eric Margolis writes: "While academia and Hollywood rightly keep attention on the Jewish Holocaust, they ignore Ukraine. We still hunt Nazi killers but not communist killers. There are few photos of the Ukraine genocide or Stalin's gulag, and fewer living survivors. Russia never prosecuted any of its mass murderers, as Germany did. We all know about crimes of Nazis Adolf Eichmann and Heinrich Himler, about Babi Yar and Auschwitz. But who remembers Soviet mass murderers Dzerzhinsky, Kaganovitch, Yagod, Yezhov, and Beria.... The souls of Stalin's millions of victims still cry out for justice."

A treasured myth

Little wonder that those Ukrainians who remember their history, fear another integration into Russia, especially when Russia refuses to own up to its past.

Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko observes that the concept of 'a return to Europe and a return to itself ran as a red thread through the Ukrainian national rebirth in the 19th and 20th centuries." She refers to the "myth of Europe" being a kind of "paradise lost – a place where justice and prosperity reign and where human rights are honoured... Like our neighbours the Poles and the Balts, we want to return home."

However, this myth is slowly dying in the Ukraine as the people there realize that their own country as well as European countries are not free from corruption and are also governed by irresponsible men of power. The dream of justice and equality no longer lives in those countries.

So what's the Ukraine to do only a few years after the "Orange Revolution"? What are the Russians up to as they see an opportunity to diminish the influence of the United States and their NATO allies? What are the United States and its allies willing to do to confront the Russians? These are the kind of questions that create a lot of uncertainty in the hearts of most Ukrainians. Some say that it might be prudent not to accelerate absorption into the European family of nations while the bear is waking up from its hibernation.

Muslims, Christians break Ramadan fast together

Judith Sudilovsky

Bethlehem, West Bank, (ENI)– More than one thousand boisterous Bethlehem University students crowded into the college's cafeteria as dusk fell, in order to break the fast of the Muslim Ramadan holiday with a traditional evening Iftar meal. Muslim women wearing brightly coloured hijabs sat at tables with Christian friends, who had gold crucifixes hanging around their necks.

Though the day was a Muslim holiday, both Christian and Muslim students were eating the special meal. Some Christian students had even joined their Muslim friends in the traditional Ramadan fast in order to experience the holiday fully.

"I wanted the experience to be genuine," said Roman Catholic 19-year-old computer science student Jacob Asal Salibi, when he attended the meal on the 19th day of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. It is during this month that Muslims observe the Fast of Ramadan. In 2008, the fast largely coincides with the month of September.

"I wanted all of us to start [eating] food together at the same time," said Salibi. The experience, he added, had strengthened relations between Christian and Muslims at the university, a Catholic co-educational place of higher learning founded in 1973 and open to students of all faith traditions.

"Sometimes there are differences between Muslims and Christians, between Palestinians, but we are proud to sit together here and eat together," said Salibi.

Merna Al Azzeh, aged 21 and a Muslim English literature and translation student, said she had been touched by her Christian friend's gesture of respect for her holiday.

"It was really nice of Jacob to fast with me. You feel closer to your friend when you respect each other's religion," she said. At Christmas, she added, "We also visit friends' homes", and go to the Church of the Nativity, which is said to mark the birthplace of Jesus.

A cultural event

A music and traditional Palestinian dance program followed the meal.

Brother Jack Curran, vice-president for development at Bethlehem University, noted that for over 10 years the university had traditionally hosted an Iftar dinner.

"It's a cultural student event, and it speaks to our service to the Palestinian people in Bethlehem, both Muslim and Christian," said Curran. "We do similar events for Christmas."

The communal Iftar meals also demonstrate that the university is confident enough in its own Christian identity to host a Muslim feast, and reflects the university's mission to build community among people, said Brother Peter Iorlano, coordinator of institutional values at the university.

"It says that we have good relations with our Muslim brothers and sisters," Iorlano said, noting that there was a strong sense of hospitality in the event, with students inviting their professors and university staff to join them for the meal. "In the university, Muslim-Christian relations are good. There certainly are conflicts between Muslims and Christians from time to time in [society in] general, but here Christians and Muslims become friends," Iorlano added.

Citizens for Public Justice addresses four election issues

Mariel Angus and **Chandra Pasma**

Mariel Angus is an intern with CPJ.
Chandra Pasma is CPJ's public justice policy analyst.

In this federal election, Christians have a lot to think about. Public justice principles can help us as we approach so many compelling and competing issues. Public justice doesn't offer a recipe for good government policy, or a formula for partisan preference. But it prioritizes norms for decision-making that focus on the values of justice, compassion and care for the marginalized and the earth. A public justice framework challenges us, as Canadians and people of faith, to express love for our neighbour and to seek the common good.

Here's a glimpse into four major election issues seen from the perspective of public justice.

Envisioning Canada without poverty

One in ten Canadians lives in poverty. Poverty undermines the dignity of people created in the image of God and challenges their ability to carry out their God-given responsibilities as full, contributing members of our society.

It's time for a federal poverty reduction strategy. A poverty reduction strategy is an integrated plan that targets multiple initiatives towards solving poverty. Addressing poverty requires the involvement of every level of government, as well as contributions from citizens, businesses and other organizations.

Within Canada's federal system, though, leadership from the federal government is important for deve-loping a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to solve poverty. The federal government has certain tools that it can use, such as tax credits and government transfers. It also has responsibility for policies and programs that impact poverty, and it can provide support for provincial strategies and efforts as well.

During this election campaign, ask your candidates about their vision for a Canada without poverty. By making poverty reduction a collective priority, together we can make our public justice vision a reality. We encourage you to delve into these issues with your candidates, family and friends.

Taxes and the common good

Taxation has loomed large in discussions about economic management and the future of the Canadian economy. But the talk is just about numbers, focused solely on tax cuts. However, taxes are not a single-sided issue about how much Canadians contribute: taxes are equally about government programs and services, poverty and inequality.

Taxes provide the revenues that maintain our democratic institutions and fund our public education and our public health care. They also create crucial social infrastructure for our communities and our families and reduce inequalities between people.

Taxes are an important tool that help the government carry out its public justice tasks. They are a major contribution to the common good and an investment in our shared future. Tax cuts might have short-term appeal, but real leadership takes the long-term view.

What kind of Canada do we want to live in? And how do collective programs and services contribute to that? We need to go beyond the narrow approach that looks at tax cuts as an isolated set of numbers, and recognize the contribution that government revenues make to our entire society.

The environment

The call to care for creation is growing stronger daily as we see clear evidence of climate change in melting ice caps, warmer winters and the rapid loss of biodiversity. Preserving and protecting all creation is an important role for citizens to play.

Christians believe that the earth and all life in it is a gift from God. As part of creation, human beings need to recognize our place within it, and that we have no right to terminally destroy what was meant to exist for all, and for all generations. A public justice perspective sees the common good as including effective action for environmental protection.

On the world stage, Canada is far from being seen as a global envir-onmental leader. Our withdrawal from the Kyoto Accord and reticence to sign a new international agreement at the Bali Climate Change Conference last December are clear evidence of this. If we don't address climate change now, how much more difficult will caring for creation be in the future?

At home, Canadians continually rate environmental action as a primary concern, and several political parties are insisting that the environment should be a central debate in this elec-tion. Let's hold our candidates to past commitments and call them to a future that includes active care for creation.

Neighbours

The United Nations reported 16 million refugees fled the violence of their countries in 2007, and over 50 million other people were displaced within their own countries. Canada accepts a tiny percentage of the world's refugees: less than one-tenth of our total immigration. A public justice lens challenges us to seek justice and assist those fleeing unsafe situations.

Canada has enacted national security policies which unintentionally often hamper refugee rights. Church and citizen groups sponsoring refugees encounter policy difficulties that threaten their ability to receive refugees. Refugees who feel their case was not adequately heard by the Immigration and Refugee Board do not have an accessible appeal process.

Newcomers including recent immi-grants also experience higher poverty rates and lower earnings. The government could help newcomers integrate by streamlining processes so professionals trained abroad can work in Canada. Raising the minimum wage, increasing training opportunities and strengthening Canada's labour standards to better protect migrant and recently-arrived workers would also improve the situation for newcomers.

We need to encourage politicians to enact policies that do not penalize newcomers. This election could allow public justice advocates to raise our voices for and with marginalized newcomers – our neighbours.

Citizens for Public Justice encourages you to explore these and other issues and discuss them with your family, friends and candidates during this election campaign.

Asking public justice questions when considering election issues will enable you to discern policies and practices that reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship.

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Guest editorial

When no political party fully reflects your views

Bert den Boggende

My differences with political parties started in the early 1960s in the Netherlands around the time I was eligible to vote. It was not for lack of choice, since there were nearly a dozen parties, ranging from about a half dozen Christian parties to communist, liberal and labour parties, and by the time I left for Canada in 1967 there were several more. With my religious and educational background, and reading a daily newspaper reflecting the views of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), the party Abraham Kuyper had founded, it would have been "natural" to vote for the ARP, and yet, two events made me turn away from it.

Two disappointments

The first one concerned the Dutch colony New Guinea, which had been promised some form of autonomy. However, the former Dutch colony Indonesia laid claim to New Guinea as well, although geographically, ethnically, and biologically the island and its people had little connection to Indonesia. When war broke out, the United States pressured (I called it "bullied") the Dutch government to relinquish the island – oil rich Indonesia was more important to the US than its small NATO ally the Netherlands. By caving in the government, and for me in particular the ARP, reneged on its promises to the Papuans. The event made me dislike president Kennedy and shocked my faith in the ARP (I felt betrayed, perhaps a teenager reaction) and in the political system. At the present time Indonesia, the Netherlands, and the United States are co-responsible for the oppression of the Papuans.

The second event was of a local nature. As founder, president, coach, and player of a volleyball club that had quickly risen to a level that made the low-ceilinged local gyms unacceptable to the league, I wanted to see a sport hall being built in town. The ARP, which had great influence on the budget and ran a tight financial ship, gave no support. We were forced to play our home games in a spacious but often cold fruit and vegetable hall, in which we needed to lay a special floor for every game. I ran for council on this issue and although I did not get elected, the issue came to be seen as more urgent. I should add that after I emigrated a sport hall was built.

Not a good record

It was not until 1976, when I became a Canadian citizen, that I had the right to vote again. I had waited more than the minimum years required for my naturalization and the reason for that has played an important role in my views of the parties. In 1971-2 I taught a grade 8 history class, and part of the course dealt with native peoples. I wrote the department of Indian Affairs for copies of all Indian treaties, which I received in due time. The treaties struck me as so blatantly unfair that I found it difficult to become a citizen. It took some time for me to change my mind, and to think (and hope) that as a Canadian citizen I could perhaps do more for native people than as a landed immigrant. Canadian governments don't have a good record in dealing with native people. Admittedly, other governments around the world don't have a good record either, but that is still no excuse.

I could make a very long list of issues showing that political parties often don't reflect my views. As Christians we are expected to be caretakers of God's creation, yet the record of federal and provincial and state governments indicate that private enterprises are allowed to plunder, destroy, and pollute that creation. We may sing "This is my Father's World," but our actions belie that song.

Survival theories

Our political parties from left to right have a materialist base for their economic programs, or, stated differently, the communist and capitalist economic ground floor idea is materialistic, even though the working out of that basic idea is different. In *Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith's extensive argument for capitalism (my 5th edition is nearly a 1000 pages long) mentions, if I recall correctly, the word greed only once, positing that greed is a necessary component of capitalism. Yet biblical teaching indicates that greed is sinful. Many Christians seem to think that it is God's gift to humankind.

John D. Rockefeller Sr. told one of his Sunday school classes that "the growth of a large business is merely the survival of the fittest…. This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working out of a law of nature and a law of God." He, like so many other tycoons, used Herbert Spencer's misguided social evolutionary theory as well as his version of God's laws to justify his often predatory business. (Incidentally, in 1851 Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," eight years before Darwin published his *The Origin of Species*.)

As the great 1929 crash indicated and the recent failures of financial institutions re-emphasize, non- and poorly-regulated capitalism can be disastrous. Paraphrasing *Sojourners'* Jim Wallis' observation that God is neither Republican nor Democrat, I would suggest that God is neither capitalist nor socialist.

A long list

Governments and parties promised long ago to eradicate (child) poverty and while there has been some progress, churches have renewed their call because so many in this country and elsewhere are still living in dire poverty.

As someone who taught in the Christian school system I have experienced the injustice against that system, although not all provinces are as unjust as Ontario.

While I am in favour of unions, the Canadian solution to provide some measure of labour stability is certainly undemocratic if not anti-democratic.

Readers may want to add such moral issues as abortions, homosexual marriages, crime, gun control, and the list could go on and on – from broad issues to specific events such as the Order of Canada given to Henry Morgentaler. But the picture should be clear enough now. Every Christian should have some issues on which he or she disagrees with every political party. The reason is actually quite simple, As Christians our homeland is not the country we live in but God's Kingdom. Our political parties always are and will remain imperfect and sometimes significantly at odds with Christian ideas. Is there a solution?

A possible solution

Some evangelical and fundamentalist preachers have argued that religion and politics don't go together. Their advocacy resembles that of the Jehovah's Witnesses and of the Anabaptists, both partly due to their understanding of pacifism, although their understanding of pacifism differs significantly. In fact, many Mennonites participate nowadays in the political system, while remaining pacifists. For most Christians non-participation has not been a solution, partly because it is dualistic and partly because it goes against the notion of the cultural mandate.

The late Syrt Wolters of Victoria, feeling strongly that no party reflected his perspective, suggested another solution. Years ago he proposed to the readers of this paper to vote but spoil the ballot as a form of protest. Such protest can take on different forms, such as leaving the ballot blank, writing on it that none of the candidates and parties reflect your views, or putting a large X through all the names. Probably this spoiling makes no impression on those counting the ballots. More than likely the protest will go unheard, unless perhaps a huge number of people en bloc do the same.

So what should Christians in Canada, the United States and elsewhere do? Vote as you always have done, regardless of the platforms of the parties? Vote for the one party that has one or two items about which you feel very strongly? Many evangelicals in the US have voted for the Republican Party precisely for that reason, ignoring many other moral issues. Such voting seems to be exemplifying a lack of the Christian mind.

I suggest that you make a list of issues you feel strongly about, order them in priority, and check which party represents most issues closely to your own. Then check if on other issues they are fair and just. Above all, keep in mind that God is not Republican, Democrat, NDP, Liberal, Conservative, Bloc Quebecois, Green, Christian Heritage, or any other party. Vote in such a way that the government can contribute to the fulfillment of "loving your neighbour as yourself," rather than to self-fulfillment.

Bert den Boggende, who has a PhD in British history, is a retired teacher who still does some substituting. He lives in Brooks, Alberta

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: editor@christiancourier.ca

Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca

Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

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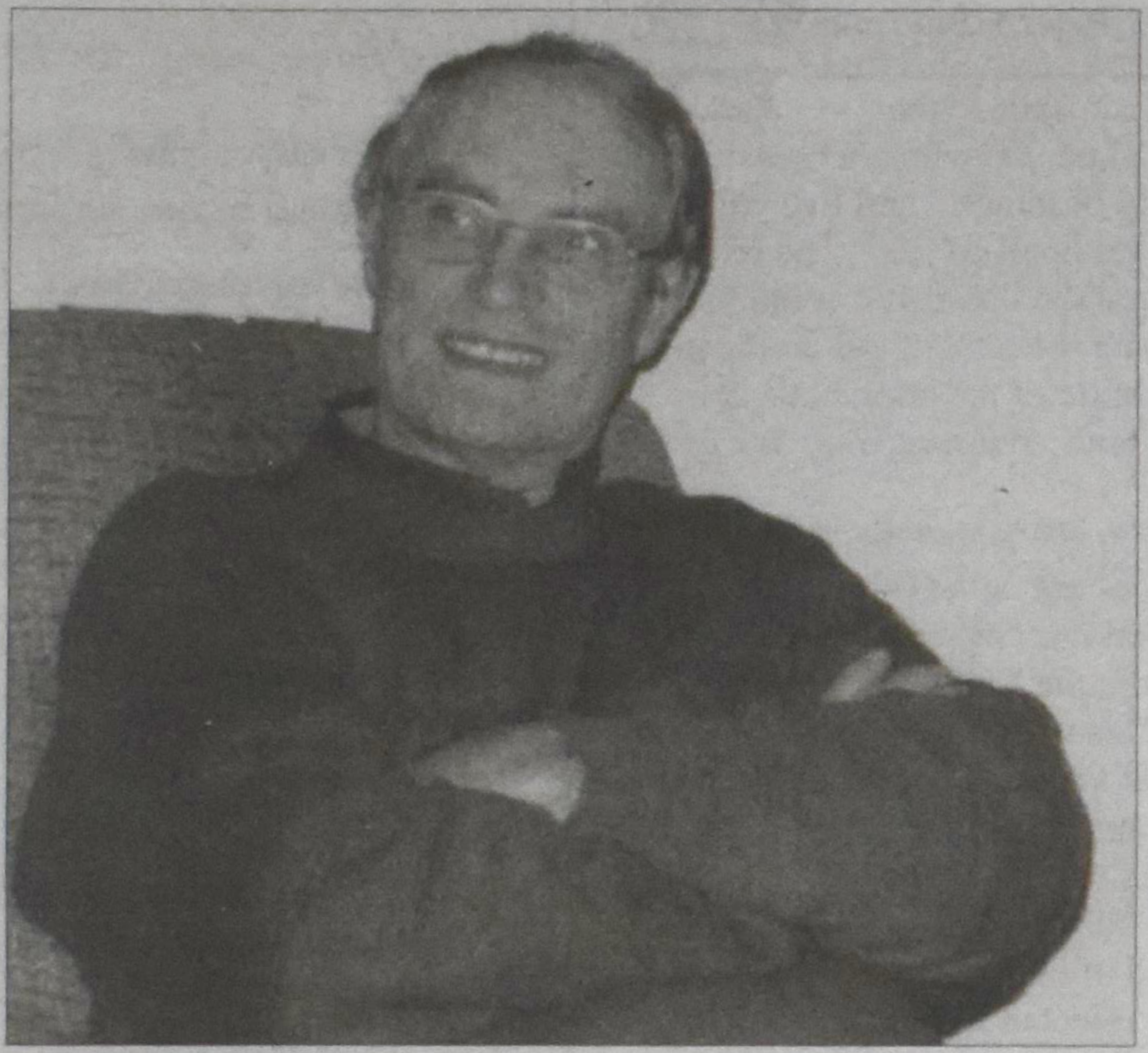
Letters

Harry der Nederlanden

March 29, 1944 - September 25, 2008



The Board of the *Christian Courier* announces that Editor Harry der Nederlanden died peacefully Thursday evening, September 25. Harry has been editor of CC for eight years. During those eight years, he provided our readership with thought-provoking editorials, that were steeped in biblical thinking, helpful news summaries, wonder-filled poetry and light-hearted anecdotes, drawings and stories. Harry is survived by his loving wife, Rose, four children, their partners and three grandchildren.

We all were amazed at how courageously Harry faced the end of his life on earth. He firmly believed in the power of the Resurrection both in his life and work as well as in his expectations for the future. We present one of his poems written in the last weeks of his life as the testimony that best describes Harry's trust in God's judgment and his love for God's Creation.

You O Lord are a loving, merciful God;
even your judgments drip with mercy
like sunlight from the leaves
of oaks, maples and willows in Short Hills.

You, O Lord, are a Lord of the living
and you are our source of life,
even beyond the grave. All living
things move, leap, roar and sing in praise
of you from the cicadas high in the trees
to the cows and bulls lowing in the pasture.

The waterfalls and cataracts splashing down
the escarpment burst with sparks of light
and give liquid voice to the life that surges
even through rock and water and sunlight.

But more delightful to you, O Lord,
are the praises of your people as they
open their throats and hearts to you
to praise you and give you thanks
for we are your troubadours, your chorus.
We have been given life and breath and voice
to make the earth and sky vibrate and echo
with the words and melodies you've given us.

Time surges, breaks, circles like a river
like Niagara's booming splurge
carrying us it seems wildly and forever
we plan, we dream, we love and labor.
Then even the strongest hands begin to quiver
and lose their grip on worldly things.

On behalf of the Board,
Bert Witvoet, acting editor

The Board of Reformed Faith Witness has received a $5,000 donation for the continuation of *Christian Courier*. The donor will double that amount if supporters of CC will raise $10,000. Supporters can send donations to Reformed Faith Witness at 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1.

Pre-emptive strike against Death, a Song or two –

a personal tribute to Harry der Nederlanden

Editor Harry der Nederlanden's brave and moving editorials in the last while about his dying occasion this response. As a person past three-score-and-ten years myself (Psalm 90:9-10), I am very aware that I could soon die. Who can I trust to carry out **my** "memorial service" if the Lord does not come back beforehand? Or, is it wiser just to fade away quietly "into that dark night" which I know will be coming to rest in the light of God's grace?

Our life time on this old earth is precious because it is "once-only" in character, and the enemy of Death (I Corinthians 15, especially v.26) over which Jesus Christ **has** triumphed, still has a sting for the loved ones and friends of "the deceased." Christians like the Stoics may not be afraid of death, but it is the dying and pain which gets to every body deep. As Shakespeare said,

"For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently"
(*Much Ado About Nothing,* V,1).

And toothaches are nothing compared to incessant, boiling-roiling pain inside your gut. Besides, the pleasures of good tasting bread and a glass of wine, the caress of a loved one, a capitvating conversation or playing a game with a friend, are gifts hard to let go of.

As a follower of Jesus Christ it is not morbid to remember the death of your parents and friends when you know they are "safe in the arms of Jesus," because the sad event is touched by grace and certainty (cf. Jacob Eppinga, "Of Death and Grace," *The Banner*, September 2008, pp.46-47).

When my Mother was buried in the pouring rain, Pastor Vernon Luchies' words to just myself, my father and brothers alone by the open hole in the ground, on Job 23: 10, proclaiming that her body tested and twisted by rheumatoid arthritis would now come forth refined like fine gold, you never forget it.

When I spoke as my Father's body was lowered into the deep grave with his favourite Bible verse, "All things work together for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28), and family members threw down earth and flowers on the casket, you feel as if you have made an important transition: as eldest son I am now the oldest survivor in the family, to be faith-bearer for the next generations.

When my old friend of long standing, philosopher Dewy Hoitenga, after the sudden arrival of pancreatic cancer, phoned me from his dying hospital bed in Michigan to say in typical Dewey fashion, "I'm trying to die in the most normal way possible," you had to groan with the pain and half smile and thank God all together in sadness at the faith-filled utterance.

When my colleague and friend George Vandervelde was suddenly stricken with a probably fatal illness, a few of our congregation gathered at the Toronto hospital to share communion with him and Bea, and after taking the bread and wine, sang "Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace....Trusting in the Father, hearts are fully blest, finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest"– As the song drifted through the quiet hospital ward, you felt deeply the strengthening power of faith in our Lord well up over the disconsolation.

I wrote a hymn text to sing at any elderly believer's funeral, to a wonderful 1608 Reformation melody. Originally it was conceived to be sung for anyone past fifty, since that is what my age was in 1983. I must admit I was praying in those days for an extra 15-Hezekiah years (Isaiah 38), even though I felt "ready to go" at the time.

It is a vigorous tune with a strong melody ending with the descent of an octave to reach the finality of the minor scale tonic resting tone. The trouble is, given the fashion of "Bible choruses" today, few people in my Christian Reformed Church communion know this gutsy Reformation melody. And at memorial services it is best to sing songs people know, "old favourites."

Pre-emptive strike continued on page 7

Harry (Arie) der Nederlanden

Hillegom, the Netherlands
March 29, 1944

At home – St. Catharines
September 25, 2008

Died peacefully at age 64.

Harry loved to read the two books of God's revelation – the Bible and the Creation. He also loved to read books about the two Books. And he dearly loved his family. We will miss him very much.

He is survived by his wife for 41 years, Rose, his children Nathan (Christine), Clarissa (Gregg) Taylor, Pamela (Adam Mousley) and Jonathan (Christina Vanden Bosch), and his grandchildren Jacob, Chelsea and Max. He is the brother of Nel (Bill) Schoonderbeek and Audrey der Nederlanden.

The funeral service was held on Wednesday, October 1, 2008, at Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines. Internment followed at Victoria Lawn Cemetery. If desired, memorial donations can be made to Reformed Faith Witness, the publisher of *Christian Courier* at 5 Joanna Dr, St Catharines ON L2N 1V1.

Perspective

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

Uncertain about certainty

Peter Schuurman

I've become less certain about certainty. It's not that I have become less certain about matters of faith. I've always been quick to question things, so this is no fall from grace. It's more that I have become less sure that certainty is possible or desirable.

When I was a teenager I felt pressure to pursue certainty. This pressure was self-imposed to a degree, but some church-related experiences didn't help. Some evangelistic sermons could put the stakes as high as hell, and books like Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith* led me down a road that portrayed faith as indisputable scientific documentation. Worst of all was that I felt certainty was necessary for acceptance in church, in ministry, and in God's eyes.

I'm using the word *certainty* in a very specific way. I mean a mathematical sort of certainty – an invincible cognitive vision, the undeniable personal assurance of direct correspondence between one's thoughts and reality. In other words, absolute, perfect knowledge that God exists and cares enough to be Jesus Christ for the world – and that this makes all the difference.

I saw this unwavering confidence as the essence of the Bible, and if one believes the Bible, this special certainty becomes one's personal possession. It is beyond doubt – doubt being a sign of weakness or even sin.

The winds of doubt

Yes, I'm caricaturing a particular part of myself. But the reality of this quest for certainty was revealed when I took Greek in college. I remember shuffling dejectedly into my professor's office because we had been translating an epistle from the original Greek, and I was becoming weighed down. When you look at the Greek text, you'll see it yourself: half the page is footnotes explaining where the numerous manuscripts and their fragments differ. Much of what we call "the original Greek" is a good scholarly guess from various discrepant copies of the originals. I was bringing my doubts to my rabbi.

The problem was not only that the Bible was no longer an impeccably airtight literary document; it goes way beyond that. Growing up in Toronto and attending various secular universities I could not but be impressed with the deep and vast differences in worldview that exist in this world. I've met some very intelligent Muslims, Marxists, and Modernists who have challenged me with really tough, soul-searching questions. Many times I've been left wondering if my faith was an accident of my birth. There is a part of me that wrestles like Jacob, questions like Job, doubts like Thomas, and renounces like Peter.

This isn't just me. Some would say this uncertainty is the general consensus like never before. Sociologist Peter Berger has always said that modern pluralism undermines the taken-for-grantedness of beliefs and values, making certainty harder to come by. More recently, eminent Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in his 890 page tome *A Secular Age* says that secularization is more than anything about a change in the conditions of belief. He says we have changed from a world where people lived naively in a religious universe – and where this was the unarguable default option – to a world of many options, and in fact, where a materialistic worldview seems like the more plausible one at first blush. We stand in the cross-winds, as it were, being pulled now to belief, now to unbelief. "What has happened in our civilization," he concludes, "is that we have largely eroded …immediate certainty."

The myth of certainty

I was so relieved when in graduate school I stumbled upon a book entitled *The Myth of Certainty* by Daniel Taylor. This book introduces a type of Christian called "the reflective Christian" – the kind of people who are "sensitive and fascinated by the complexity of things," and live with "an openness to the nuances and grace notes of life." The reflective Christian is uncomfortable around the literalistic certainties of the fundamentalist but also among the pretentious confidence of the liberal rationalist. The subtitle of the book hints at a sense of adventure to Christian faith: *Trusting God, Asking Questions, Taking Risks.*

One important discovery I've made is that the type of certainty I'm describing here does not come from the biblical testimony. In fact, the kind of certainty modern human beings seek is an inheritance from the Enlightenment and the influence of scientific culture. This unassailable confidence in one's ideas is actually an idol, or *ideology* and its denial of the fallenness of our thinking has caused the world deep pain.

Postmoderns have rightly said that this certainty is impossible (a "modern myth"), but they have still bought the same bill of goods. Only instead of chasing after it like the moderns they have vehemently rejected it. They are certain about radical uncertainty and are left to simply play with ideas or become paralyzed by doubt. This is the argument of Jamie Smith in his recent gem *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* He says we do not have to choose between certainty as an idol and certainty as an anathema. It's a false dilemma. Knowing is more like loving than like perfect thinking.

Hope as certainty

This is an incredibly liberating testimony. What if certainty was more like hope, as it is in Hebrews 11:1? What if the knowledge we have is not absolute, but relational, based on faith, hope and love rather than on mathematical correspondence? This is the real biblical tradition: certainty understood as conviction, as the certainty of the heart, as a deep and abiding *trust* gifted by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. That is a kind of certainty – ancient yet so new – I can embrace, and it is the best anyone can have.

Some versions of Christianity over the last century have been called "muscular" for their assertive, if not arrogant attitude. Radical Islam is equally insistent on its superiority, ironically not unlike some of the recent hard-core atheist books. But Christianity ought to be different – more like the approach given in the tell-tale titled book *Humble Apologetics* by John Stackhouse.

I wonder if a "weak" Christianity, in the tradition of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 ("when I am weak than I am strong") and the self-emptying *kenosis* of Jesus (Philippians 2) offers a way forward. If this is not based on a mainline church sense of lingering Christian guilt or melancholic disdain of evangelism and critical dialogue, it may hold promise. We do not need the modern sort of certainty in order to engage today's world. We can passionately believe on the basis of the testimony of Christian tradition and experience, and that is sufficient for life. Faith even the size of a mustard seed can move mountains.

Feelings of insecurity can prompt us to shout louder or to question the old certainties. When I was asking my professor about the Greek manuscripts, he wisely did not raise his voice to assure me that the Bible did fall out of heaven or to prove to me that the scholarly process is scientifically fail-safe. He did something I'll never forget. He basically said that he had his doubts, too, and urged me to not isolate myself from the community of faith. "Keep reflecting," he said, "and stay connected." In hindsight, maybe he was saying that relationship is more important than knowledge. Or better: relationship is the way in which we come to know.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

If

If we had not travelled to Bolivia
We would not have met Samuel

If we had not met Samuel
With the intense eyes and curious mind
He would not have introduced us
To his brother Yani

If I had not let Samuel take photos
Of his family
I would not have this reminder
Of his ten-year-old brother
With his dark clear eyes
And peaceful face

And I would not feel this strange pain
A year later
For a young boy
Thousands of miles away
Dying from a brain tumor

On Being Anxious

She carries the whole weight
of harvest in her bones.

The barometer on the wall
mirrors the intensity in her body,
blue water creeping up the stem
to indicate low pressure.

Unable to block out the hundreds of rounds
the swather must make between rain showers,
the days of drying,
fifteen between spraying the standing wheat
and going out to combine it.

The weight shifts from her shoulders
to her lower back
as she remembers the dusty hours in the field
the incessant sneezing after
two consecutive days,
and this crop thick,
yes, a good thing,
but meaning first gear
and perhaps three loads per round.
They would be at this harvest forever
She thought.

But it happened smoothly,
day by day.
The work was done
between varying weather patterns,
and all she had carried in her head
so unnecessary
like being anxious
about what you should wear
or eat
for your Father in heaven
knows
what you need.

Linda Siebenga

Pre-emptive strike *continued from page 5*

Here is the song to sing after death has done its worst: Psalter-Hymnal #491

Three commentary notes:

(1) As Bert Polman wrote: "Seerveld...has requested that a New Orleans jazz-style interlude be improvised between stanzas 3 and 4 in the tradition of African-American funerals in the southern United States. In those funerals sad music is traditionally played en route to the cemetery, but upbeat, joyful jazz is played as the mourners return home to emphasize their sure belief in a Christian resurrection" (*Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, 1998, p.661).

(2) The original stanza 3 reads:

"O Spirit, mend our grieving; our brother now is safe, white-robed near God's throne, laughing because he died in faith."

The Psalter-Hymnal Committee deciding on such matters felt that believers' deaths are not always "laughing matters," and altered the text to what now stands there. I still hope to be laughing **after** my death, but realize the terrible pain Harry and we all fear may make the Committee text more appropriate.

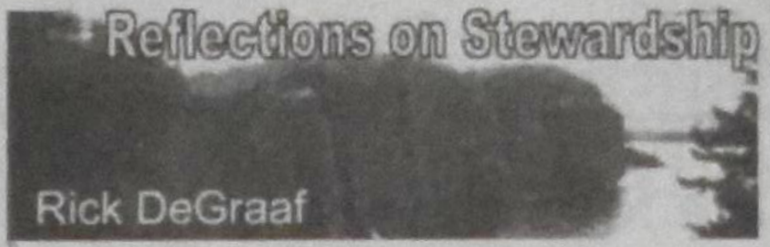
(3)To try to get this strong melody more known into the mouths of more believers, I recently wrote a different text to this song which would be appropriate for PTA (Parent-Teachers' Association) meetings of Christian School societies (cf. *Christian Educators Journal*, October 2007, pp. 18-19). Given how infrequently Christians sing outside church worship services, to make this Andermacher Gesangbuch melody become "an old favourite" is probably a forlorn wish.

An other tack we could take to alleviate our fear of painful dying is the preposterous request for Christ to come back soon (Revelation 22: 20), as he promised 2000 years ago. If you should want, as music leader in a congregation, to introduce the younger and older generartions of your communion to a melody with syncopated grit (cf. Marian Van Til's good article i*n Christian Courier*, "Calvin's jigs and Luther's chorales revisited," 25 August 2008, pp.14-15), you might try the following hymn, "O Christ! Come back to save your folk." Psalter-Hymnal #330

This 1666 Augsburg hymn has a robust character that has been distilled out of christian experience that was not middle-class and was not at ease in padded pews. So, many of us will need a sanctified imagination to join the saints who sang this melody as a "fresh, favourite" song, a "pre-emptive strike against death." Given all the wars and cancers afflicting us here and around God's world, maybe it would be good to have a few solid "pre-emptive" songs like this as arrows ready in our quiver.

Calvin Seerveld, Toronto

Note: To anyone who sends me a self-addressed stamped envelope, I would be glad to send a short academic article on "Ways-of-life and becoming elderly wise" (2006) which contrasts the American way of death, the Stoic and Taoist approach, with a biblical "full-of-years" perspective on death. Mail request to C. Seerveld, Institute for Christian Studies, 229 College Street West, Toronto ON M5T 1R4



Sustainability: a rising star?

Rising energy prices are sure having an impact on our lives. It costs so much more to fuel the car and heat our homes lately. They also impact the prices of our groceries. The worst part is that the most vulnerable are hurt the most. Many people in developing countries are struggling to meet the increasingly high cost of food.

Not all the changes are bad, however. Not to minimize the terrible impact on those who struggle to meet the rising costs, but the rising costs are a "wake up" call pressuring us towards more sustainable ways of living.

For too long we have been guzzling energy and pumping CO_2 into the atmosphere at ever-increasing rates. Our rate of consumption has begun to outstrip the rate we can pump oil out of the ground. It is obvious that we are no longer able to sustain these rates. The wells are beginning to dry up!

It reminds me of the parable of the prodigal son – Luke 15: 11-32. I am certain that readers of this column know the story well. The younger of two brothers demands from his father his inheritance, and – surprise, surprise – the father gives him half of his wealth. It seemed like an endless 'well' of money – but eventually the "well' ran dry.

In many ways our lifestyle, which is so dependent on fossil fuel energy, is also unsustainable. Our energy-extravagant ways are catching up with us, and we need to act more responsibly. Surprise, surprise – God the creator, the giver of all things has given us a free hand, but increasingly our management is being called to account!

Just six weeks ago, Edith and I had the privilege to tour the Wild Horse Wind-farm operated by the Puget Sound Electric Development in the State of Wyoming. It was amazing to step inside one of the many giant windmills we saw and to hear the strong swoosh, swoosh noise the gigantic wings made as the leading tips spun over 150 mph above us. I welcome this development as well as other more sustainable technologies that are being developed and commissioned every day. A large 14-acre solar farm is being commissioned not too far from our place in Cambridge. I'm also grateful to see the automobile and truck manufacturers finally offering more efficient alternatives and developing many more.

It's too bad that it didn't happen until it hurt us in the wallet!

I am grateful that more and more people are finally making more stewardly choices. I'm also grateful that more of us are thinking about sustainability and asking questions about the long term. There is a precedent for this in our forest industry. For years now logging firms have been planting new saplings to replace the trees that they have harvested. It may be that developing a similar approach to meet our appetite for energy is a long way away, but it must begin by having the goal in mind. For far too long the only sustainability criteria for many of us has been whether or not we can afford it. We can clearly see a change today – evidenced by the declining sales of inefficient gas guzzling vehicles.

It's about choices. Please make the change now rather than waiting until your purse is running dry. As more sustainable alternatives become available – choose them and if they are not available yet, be a leader in conservation and re-cycling. Wise, sustainable stewardship demands it!

Stewardly tip: Towards more sustainability: facilitate a discussion in your home and challenge everyone to develop and implement more sustainable ways of meeting your energy needs. It's not just about conservation or getting more physically active (less driving) but it's also about making choices and welcoming new alternatives (wind/solar/solariums).

Readers: Share your "Stewardly tips" so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by email to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Financial tools glossary

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario. Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

God will send protection

When my son Joey died, a miracle happened. I felt that his spirit was still present with me. His humorous ways and his energetic presence were everywhere. I knew in my heart that Jesus had made all this possible at a time when it seemed that Satan triumphed because my son had died.

My son Peter died after waiting patiently. Again a miracle happened. When looking at him I couldn't fathom the "peace that passes understanding" which had overtaken him.

When I heard that my brother was terribly ill, I felt despair and hoped the doctors could find a cure. Again, miraculously, I was presented a helpless fawn on the side of the road. I just didn't happen to be there to carry him to safety and join his mother; I knew God placed me there at the right time. I was assured that God will send his protection and carry my brother in the same manner.

Jesus reveals through his creation that we were meant to live. Just as a moth is drawn to a lamp at night, the love of Jesus draws us out of the darkness into his light and protection.

Audrey der Nederlanden

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Send application by e-mail to:

Bert Witvoet at bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca

We welcome input from the general readership regarding names of possible applicants and further suggestions about the future of the *Christian Courier*.

Christian newspaper group tackles 'Oprah's Gospel'

'Decidedly New Age,' says reports brainchild

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (EPA) – "Oprah's Gospel," an in-depth report about the spiritual beliefs of wildly popular entertainment mogul Oprah Winfrey, appeared in earlier this year in 23 Christian newspapers as part of an unprecedented joint project. The participating newspapers represent a combined distribution of 500,000 copies in 20 U.S. states and British Columbia.

The project involved 13 separate newspaper groups, all members of the Fellowship of Christian Newspapers (FCN), an affinity group within the Evangelical Press Association (EPA). In all, FCN represents about 40 regional Christian newspapers in the United States and Canada.

FCN members participate in frequent online interaction sharing technical, business and philosophical ideas. The group also participates in national advertising buys. Each spring, FCN presents an award for "Christian Newspaper of the Year" and various other writing awards.

The joint reporting venture was the brainchild of Lamar Keener, publisher of five *Christian Examiner* regional papers and the *Minnesota Christian Chronicle*. Keener, who also serves as president of the EPA, said the report about Oprah's beliefs was not a hit piece, but one that carefully shows her stance on spirituality, while also acknowledging her significant positive contributions within the entertainment industry and generosity towards many worthy causes.

'YouTube' video got him going

In 2002 *Christianity Today* declared that Oprah "has become one of the most influential spiritual leaders in America." But that influence is not necessarily a good influence. Keener says, "I was drawn to the subject of what Oprah believes about faith and spirituality by a YouTube video being highly circulated on the Internet." He adds, "Personally, not being a viewer of any daytime television, I was unaware of both the magnitude of Oprah's audience and influence as well as the full nature of her message that is decidedly New Age and very much in conflict with biblical Christianity. It seemed like a story too big for us to do alone, so I enlisted a dozen other Christian newspaper publishers to join us in hiring a reporter for the project."

The writer for the project, Steve Rabey, is an EPA member and nationally recognized Christian journalist in the U.S., based in Colorado Springs. In his report Rabey explores Oprah's belief that many paths lead to God. Among those who have influenced her spiritual beliefs is best-selling author Ekhart Tolle. According to the article Tolle mixes philosophies from Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, and uses such terms as "higher self" and "new consciousness."

In the report Rabey uncovers a quote from Oprah telling fans to persist with Tolle's book because "we need to change the world."

Pooled resources, big reaction

The shared reporting concept proved to be an invaluable approach for the publishers. "Regional Christian newspapers tend to be understaffed and underfunded and simply do not have the time or the financial resources to do much in-depth reporting," Keener said. "As regional publications, most of our efforts are on local stories rather than national stories. By pooling our resources we were able to hire an award-winning, well-respected Christian journalist for this important project."

The report attracted a great deal of media attention in the U.S., including a Religion News Service article picked up by *USA Today*. The FCN article also led to a report on the Fox News cable network, and two followup segments featuring EPA president Lamar Keener.

A full version of "Oprah's Gospel: Entertainment mogul preaches 'many paths' to God," may be found on the *Christian Examiner* website (www.christianexamine r.com) and some of the other participating publication websites.

The participating newspapers span the continent: *B.C. Christian News*, Vancouver (www.canadianchristianity.com/bc); *Christian Examiner*, San Diego, Orange and Los Angeles counties, Seattle (www.christianexaminer.com); Christian News Northwest, Portland, Ore. (www.cnnw.com); *The Chronicle Christian Newspaper*, Wichita (Kansas), Denver/Colorado Springs, Indianapolis, Memphis, Dallas (www .thechronicleonline.net); *Citizen USA*, Ohio (ww.christiancitizen.com); *The Desert Voice*, El Centro (Calif.),(www.desertvoice.info); *The Heartland Gatekeeper*, Omaha (www.heartlandgatekeeper.org); *Home Times Family Newspaper*, West Palm Beach (Florida), (www.hometimesnewspaper.org); *Kansas City MetroVoice* (www.metrov oicenews.com); *Living Stones News*, Duluth (Minn.), Sioux Falls (South Dakota), (www.livingstonesnews.com); *Minnesota Christian Chronicle*, Minneapolis/St. Paul (www.mcchronicle.com); *Tri-State Voice*, (New York, New Jersey, Connecticutt), (www.tristatevoice.com); *Wisconsin Christian News*, northern Wisc., upper Mich. (www.wisconsinchristiannews.com).

CRWRC facing setbacks in Haiti after hurricanes hit

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRWRC) – Recent hurricanes in Haiti have flooded crops, damaged homes and threatened livelihoods. After 33 years of working with poverty-stricken communities across this country in need, CRWRC is facing serious setbacks in many target communities. The agency is responding with food and clothing for those most desperate.

"The soil was already saturated with rain from Fay and Gustav when Hannah hit," reported CRWRC Haiti country director Ad De Blaeij in early September. "So all of the rain rushed down the mountains and flooded the plains and valleys.... While many Southern towns flooded after Gustav made landfall near Jacmel, Hannah created flooding in the North.... Nearly all areas of Haiti have been hit."

According to de Blaeij, all of CRWRC's Haitian partner agencies have reported damage in their project areas. Since many Haitians had little to start with before the hurricanes hit, they are now thrown into an even more dire crisis. Fortunately, CRWRC's well-established network of church and community leaders enable staff and partners to respond immediately in communities when disaster strikes.

International relief program manager Ken Little said yesterday that CRWRC's church partners in the affected areas are in action. "One of our larger responses is in Gonaives, which was really devastated by the floods. There, we are working with Ebenezer Mission to care for six hundred people who sought refuge from the storms in the Mission's school and hospital yards."

In all, CRWRC is providing food and roofing supplies to approximately 3,000 hurricane survivors in Gonaives, Port-au-Prince (Fort Mercredi), Petit Goave, Jacmel, Cayes, Croix des Bouquettes and Meyer.

Donations designated to CRWRC's "Hurricanes Caribbean 2008" may be given online at www.crwrc.org , by phone (Canada: 1-800-730-3490; U.S.: 1-800-55-CRWRC) or mail: CRWRC-Canada, 3475 Mainway PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8; CRWRC-US, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE, Grand Rapids MI 49560

New men's outreach visits arenas across the U.S.

BRANSON, Missouri (ANS/Christian Post) – Men at the Cross is made up of "radically committed men serving Christ, church, family and the workplace," says their founder Joe White.

White is an author, speaker and Christian camp director who formed M.A.T.C. in order to "empower men to reach men." It works to equip men to disciple other men in the Christian faith and lead their homes and communities through service. Launched on July 11 this year in St. Louis, Missouri, Men at the Cross events include practical Christian instruction, as well as inspirational speaking and live worship music.

"Men at the Cross is so much more than a mountaintop experience," says White. "Every man who comes into the arena will be equipped to mentor and train another man with a Bible study manual that we're going to provide. Our aim is to come alongside the local church by empowering men to become disciple-makers for a lifetime. We're inviting men to join other radically committed men in this movement of passion and service."

According to Steve Chavis of Chavis Crew Communications, "The theme verse of Men at the Cross comes from the Apostle Paul's famous charge to his protégé in 2nd Timothy 2:2, 'The things you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.'"

Future gatherings this year include those on September 26-27 in Charlotte, NC, and Nov. 22 in Dallas, Texas.

MEN AT THE CROSS

Steps in as Promise Keepers reassesses

The ministry was launched at a time when Promise Keepers, which has reached hundreds of thousands of men since 1990, has scaled back its stadium-sized events and is in a period of reassessing and recalibrating.

Out of requests from thousands of men, White founded Men at the Cross not as a competing men's ministry but to meet the need, he says, to help plug more men in to local churches, and to help build men become Christ-like.

With the pervasion of crime, divorce and pornography, White is hoping to tackle the root cause of it all – fatherlessness. He describes fatherlessness as men not having a "dad" who can teach them how to serve their wives, children and church and who can mentor them to follow Christ.

"We want to equip men [so] that every man eventually will have a spiritual dad in his life who can train him in difficult principles of living," White says. And it all begins at the cross.

Iran: Christian converts charged with apostasy

IRAN (ANS) – Two Christians from Muslim backgrounds were officially charged with apostasy last week at the Public and Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, Iran, raising fears for their continued well-being.

Capital punishment for apostasy is not codified in Iranian law, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) explained in a media advisory.

According to the Bill of Indictment obtained by Farsi Christian News Network (FCNN), the prosecutor requested the death penalty for 53-year-old Mahmoud Mohammad Matin-Azad and 40-year-old Arash Ahmad-Ali Basirat by evoking the judge's constitutional obligations to refer to Shari'a law, and by citing Imam Khomeini's book, Tahrir-ul-Vasile, which stipulates the death penalty for apostasy.

CSW said that as Mr Matin-Azad and Mr Basirat, who have been detained since May 15, await a verdict, another Iranian Christian, Ramtin Soodmand, has been held without formal charge since August 21, 2008. Mr. Soodmand is the son of the late Hossein Soodmand, who was the last Christian convert from Islam to be hanged following an apostasy verdict in 1990.

Appeals from the families of Mr Matin-Azad, Mr Basirat and Mr Soodmand for information on the men's welfare and for their release on bail have been continually refused.

Mervyn Thomas, chief executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide said, "The right to choose one's religion is guaranteed under international law and no individual should be subjected to harassment, let alone face capital punishment on the basis of their religious choices.

"CSW is truly concerned for the welfare of the detained men and calls upon the European Union and other key international bodies to urge the Iranian Government for their immediate release and for charges against them to be dropped."

CSW is a human rights organization which specializes in religious freedom, works on behalf of those persecuted for their Christian beliefs and promotes religious liberty for all.

Pope wants France to rethink its shunning of religion in public life

French president advocates 'positive secularism'

PARIS (Christian Today) – Pope Benedict XVI's first visit to France since his election has fuelled debate on church-state relations in a country which is one of Europe's most deeply secular and prides itself in keeping faith and politics strictly separate. Bishop Fortunato Baldelli, the Vatican's ambassador for France, says, "French secularism assumes that religion has no real social dimension, that it must remain private and doesn't have the right to publicly express itself."

Sarkozy and Pope Benedict XVI

Two weeks ago President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni broke with tradition by greeting the Pope at the airport when he arrived in Paris. Bucking decades of staunchly secularist presidents, lapsed Catholic Mr Sarkozy said that religious "values" should play a greater role in public life.

During a visit to the Vatican last year, Sarkozy aroused controversy at home – and virulent criticism – when he called for a "positive secularism" that would make more space for religion in the public realm. The separation of church and state has been enshrined in French law since 1905.

Sarkozy has not backed away from his position. During the Pope's visit he said, "Democracy cannot content itself with relying on arithmetic vote counts. A dialogue with religions is appropriate in a democracy and respects secularism. It would be madness to do without it."

The Pope welcomed Sarkozy's attempt to get French secularists to consider that religions should have a place in public life. Benedict sought to quell the row during an open-air mass at Lourdes on September 14. "The church does not claim the state's place. She does not want to substitute it," he told pilgrims. He added, however, that France should "bring to the fore" its Christian roots to "enable each inhabitant to better understand his country."

At least 100,000 pilgrims stood in a sodden field to hear the Pope speak on the 150th anniversary of visions of the Virgin Mary to a 14-year-old peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous.

Benedict urged the throng not to lose hope in the face of today's challenges. "The power of love is stronger than the evil which threatens us," he said, later adding, "Do not allow yourselves to be discouraged by difficulties."

Kazakhstan officials 'economic war' against believers continues

Mushfig Bayram

AYAGOZ, Kazakhstan (Forum 18 News Service) – Baptists who do not wish to receive state registration continue to be punished for meeting for worship without legal status, Forum 18 News Service has learned. Three local administration officials and a police officer raided a Sunday worship service of a small congregation in Ayagoz in East Kazakhstan Region in July. Church member Pavel Leonov was later fined 100 times the minimum monthly wage after refusing to register the congregation.

On September 3 the Regional Court rejected his appeal, court officials told Forum 18. In Pavlodar Region, Oleg Voropaev was fined ten months' minimum wages for leading his Baptist congregation. "The state's compulsion of the community to register violates the rights to freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed by the Constitution," Voropaev told the court. Both Leonov and Voropaev have been fined in earlier years for their peaceful religious activity.

Baptists have described the state's actions against them as an "economic war." As well as the Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses were raided, banned and given large fines in July and August.

Dametken Sagynbekova of the Internal Policy Department of the Ayagoz District Akimat (Executive Authority) insists that the Baptists violated the law. She defends the action against the church, including a July raid on the church by the Akimat when officials filmed church members against their will.

"The Prosecutor's office authorized the filming," she told Forum 18 on September 11. "If they themselves violated the law, why do they complain about privacy?" Asked in a telephone interview whether she did not think the fine was too heavy for Leonov to be able to pay, she responded, "I don't know." She then hung up the phone.Kazakh officials insist that religious activity by unregistered religious communities is illegal, in defiance of the country's international human rights obligations.

Violation of conscience

Council of Churches Baptists – to which the Ayagoz congregation belongs – reject registration on principle as they believe it leads to unwarranted state interference in their internal affairs.

Mukhamatkalieva justified her decision saying that Voropaev did not register his community. Asked by Forum 18 on September 10 whether each religious group had a legal obligation to be officially registered, she responded that she was not going to discuss the law over the phone. "They have already complained to the regional court," she said. "We need to wait until the court rules on the appeal case."

Voropaev rejects accusations that he had violated the Article. "The state's compulsion of the community to register violates the rights to freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed by the Constitution," he told the court. Voropaev told the court that the community that he leads has neither separate estate nor banking account, and his personal leadership of the community consists only of giving sermons and organizing services. "Therefore he deems that their community has no signs of a legal person, which means that it does not need to be registered," Baptists told Forum 18. Voropaev asked the court to take into account that "the religion he professes is purely peaceful" and is a part of an international group of Baptist churches.

Closed door trial for Chinese Christian pastor

Michael Ireland

SHANDONG, CHINA (ANS) – A closed-door trial will be held for Pastor Zhang Zhongxin at 9 a.m. on September 26 at the labor camp in Shandong province where he is serving a two-year sentence of reeducation-through-labor.

According to China Aid Association (CAA), the ruling will determine whether this sentence, imposed upon Zhang on July 6 of this year, was an appropriate punishment.

CAA says Pastor Zhang's attorneys and relatives have been banned from meeting with him or reviewing his files, because authorities claim Pastor Zhang is suspected of endangering state security.

It adds that if the court finds Zhang innocent of the crimes against him, the reeducation sentence will be repealed. However, if the court rules in favor of the sentencing, Zhang will remain in labor camp until 2010.

Christian defense attorneys Li Fangping and Zhang Jianfeng continue to try to meet with Pastor Zhang. ChinaAid will continue to monitor the trial.

Michael Ireland writes for ASSIST News Service

Nature

Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

Sweet clover for poor soils, richer lives

At the south end of Wisconsin Avenue, just to the west of the Wieberdink's house were a couple vacant lots. The soil must have been lousy because the lots grew up in white sweet clover. I remember playing in that tall, rank clover, making trails, playing hide-and-seek, and making forts. (Once one of my brothers hid in his fort and ate a whole box of prunes. Evil carries its own unpleasant consequences.) It was quite a tangle by the time fall arrived. Rain and wind toppled some of the huge plants. (Well, OK, they were huge to a four-foot-high kid, but they were also huge compared to just about any crop except corn.

Then one morning in October, I was walking to school and was nearing the shoe factory when I heard a shot. It was Ron Bruggink, who came walking out of the sweet clover with a pheasant rooster. Right there! Where we were playing. We didn't know that there were pheasants there or we would have tried a mob attack with sticks, stones, willow bows-and-arrows, slingshots. Maybe we could have enlisted the help of Jinx, the town's only stray dog. Jinx was a pointer with a great nose. He would hunt happily with anyone, point a pheasant, and then run back to town when the first gun went off.

But a bunch of little Gesches, Wieberdinks, and Ernisse kids didn't have guns, so maybe we could have got the pheasant with our barbarian weapons. If only we had known that pheasants like sweet clover.

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I don't remember thinking much about sweet clover for 40 years or so. A couple years ago, however, I ordered some "cheap clover seed" to plant on the slopes of our pond. I expected alsike clover, or Dutch white clover. What I got was yellow sweet clover. I seeded it on banks in early, early spring and got a good catch. The first year it formed a green mat and several farmers said, "Hey, what is that stuff? Maybe I should be growing it instead of alfalfa."

Back to early, early spring. . . . After seeing the high germination rates on the subsoil and gravel around the pond I decided that maybe I should plant some of this yellow sweet clover as a hedge along the side of my gravel driveway. There were several reasons for doing this. First, I find myself going "machine crazy" and mowing closer and closer to the driveway every time I mow. Or I get the urge to Round-Up everything even close to the driveway. Finally, I replaced a lawn-mower blade that was so badly knocked and dulled and bent from mowing rocks – from the edge of the driveway – that it sort of clubbed my lawn grass to death instead of cutting it. (One person saw my blade and said, "You must scare the grass to death with that blade.")

This is Betsey's birthday photo. Those are Shirley poppies in the front, cilantro is the white stuff, and the background includes all sorts of things.

These are my bundles of sweet clover form a shock (stook?) against a woodpile and resting on. . . old pallets, of course.

The solution? An informal hedge of yellow sweet clover along the edge of the driveway. I figured that if that stuff could grow in gravel pits and on road shoulders it should be just right for the gravelly edge of my driveway. Maybe it would even choke out the weeds.

Soon I had a lush green hedge, more than two feet high. I didn't do anything to it in the fall and by spring it was a mat of vegetation. Not too scenic. But I noticed sprouts of green and by August I had a hedge of sweet clover more than four feet high. Because sweet clover is a perennial it blooms the second year, so my driveway had a yellow hedge along the edge.

I must admit that the sweet clover got attention from guests. Most people didn't comment too much, which was a comment of its own. A couple farmers asked me what it was and I explained that sweet clover is a legume with rhizobia on the roots which fix nitrogen, just like alfalfa.

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I don't see a mad rush to plant sweet clover on area farms, although the Kerr Cattle Company had one field of it a few years ago. Sweet clover appears on the Internet quite a few times. Some of the references are "how to get rid of sweet clover." Others mention how sweet clover is being used on the dry prairies to fix nitrogen as an alternative to "black summer fallow," preventing wind erosion at the same time.

Some sweet clovers can cause sickness in livestock, via mouldy hay or silage. The Manitoba government website tells farmers that if they plant sweet clover they should "Use low coumarin varieties. Coumarin is a substance present in varying amounts in all sweet clover species. However, two varieties of sweet clover, Norgold yellow. . . and Polara white. . . have very low coumarin content and do not pose a problem when feeding livestock."

Still, this "coumarin business" seems to strike fear into the hearts of livestock farmers. With mad cow, foot-and-mouth, blackleg, TB, and others, who needs another worry. It made me a bit uneasy, too, but apparently deer do not know about coumarin because they enjoy yellow sweet clover just fine, thank you.

(And about fear. . . while I was researching sweet clover, I found out that a very real danger, the bacterium listeria monocytogenes, "is present in . . . vegetation and grows in the ensiling process only if the pH of the silage is above 4.2." I guess that making good silage or hay is the answer to many problems.)

On the other hand, Wikipedia tells me that "Naturopaths claim that it [sweet clover] helps promote lymphatic drainage and reduce fluid retention. . . " It's also, says Wikipedia, "a major source of nectar for domestic honey bees."

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Meanwhile, I have a hedge. A cheap hedge. A renewable-resource-sort-of-hedge. In fact, I'm also cutting, bundling and threshing the seed from my hedge. Some of the seed I will use for renewing my hedge, and part for feeding chickens.

The only problem I will face with my sweet clover hedge is this: because sweet clover produces lots of nitrogen (up to 100 pounds/acre) and improves the soil, it just may be that soon that pesky lawn grass will invade the gravelly edge of my driveway, growing lush and thick and making me think about mowing again.

But that's in the future. Meanwhile, I enjoy the heavy scent, the bright green leaves, the yellow racemes (flowers) and the birds that consider sweet clover just the type of jungle they prefer. (I wish we had pheasants around here.)

Curt Gesch is a retired school teacher who will un-retire in the fall, the Lord willing.

The Salvation Army is a true army – it fights against human trafficking

An interview with Dianna Bussey by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

From September 26-28, the Salvation Army will host its third annual International Weekend of Prayer and Fasting for the Victims of Sexual Trafficking. In a recent interview with *Christian Courier (CC)*, Dianna Bussey, chairperson of the Salvation Army's Anti-Trafficking Network in Canada, explains what the Salvation Army is doing to combat this tragic crime against humanity.

CC: Define human sexual trafficking. How extensive is the problem? Why does it happen?

Bussey: The U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2006 says that human trafficking (HT) is the illegal trade in human beings through abduction, use of threat or force, deception, and fraud for the purpose of exploitation (sex, labor, domestic servitude, etc.).

HT is a serious human rights violation and a form of modern-day slavery. The United Nations estimates that 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked globally every year. There are push and pull factors for why it happens. The push factors are mainly poverty – people looking for a better life in their region or country of origin. The pull factors are people willing to exploit others to make money. The local demand of those wanting to buy sex out-weighs the supply.

CC: What is TSA's Anti-Trafficking Network (ATN)? How and when was it established?

Bussey: In May 2004, then General Larsson declared the fight against human trafficking as a global priority for TSA. Since then, throughout the Salvation Army world, programs and initiatives have been organized and implemented to combat this evil that strikes at the heart of families and communities.

In the fall of 2004, TSA Canada & Bermuda Territory established the network. Its goals are to reduce and, eventually, to eliminate sexual trafficking; to raise awareness of the evil and injustice of sexual trafficking; to engage people in prayer about sexual trafficking; to care for and assist those who have been trafficked into and within Canada for the purposes of sexual exploitation; to lobby the Canadian government to continue to enhance legislation applicable to trafficking; to financially support people at risk of being sexually trafficked; and to prevent at-risk Canadian youth from being trafficked into the commercial sexual exploitation.

CC: How did God lead you to become the chairperson of the ATN?

Bussey: Good question . . . because I am sure in a million years I wouldn't have thought I'd be in this position. In the spring of 1997, our office was approached by the Winnipeg Police Service and Manitoba Justice to administer the John School Program (now called the Prostitution Offender Program). At that point, my education on sexual exploitation began. A year later, with funds generated from the first program, we launched the first Prostitution Diversion Camp for those who are sexually exploited through street prostitution. Other initiatives have stemmed out of these programs and the advisory committee that oversees them.

In June 2004, I accepted the appointment to be the Territorial Representative on the Salvation Army's initiatives against Human Trafficking. The first task was to establish a Canadian Anti-Trafficking Network with representatives from each division to bring awareness and create initiatives against trafficking and domestic prostitution.

CC: How has your role as the ATN's chairperson had an impact on your faith life and your understanding of God's love for victims of sexual trafficking? What are the joys and challenges of your job?

Bussey: I always warn people when I speak about HT that if they want to get involved in this fight, it's a burden. It's something that is difficult to stop thinking about. However, the joys are many: witnessing how willing people are to help once they receive information; seeing how much difference small steps can make, like being open and genuine with street women; and watching God's healing power in incredibly damaged lives.

CC Do you struggle with feelings of inadequacy or defeat because the problem is so extensive? If so, how do you cope?

Bussey: Definitely, especially because of pornography. Brave, honorable Christian men and women need to speak out on the issue. I cope by remembering God's instructions in Micah 6:8: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." I also have amazing people in my life whom I can talk to, and my employer gives me a lot of support.

CC: What can Christians do to fight against the crime of human trafficking?

Bussey: Pray! Organize events to raise awareness of HT, prostitution, and pornography. Realize that people involved in these activities need our assistance and prayers, not our judgment. Address the demand side of prostitution. Assist those who feel they have no alternative other than to sell themselves. Support anti-poverty campaigns or anything that assists families, children, and communities on a local, national, and international scale. For information and resources about the third annual International Weekend of Prayer and fasting for the Victims of Sexual Trafficking check out our website at www.salvationists.ca/trafficking.

Dianna Bussey has worked for The Salvation Army (TSA) Correctional & Justice Services since 1992. She has administered the Winnipeg Prostitution Offender Program and the Winnipeg Prostitution Diversion Program since their inceptions in 1997 and 1998, respectively. In 2001, she became the Director of TSA's Correctional and Justice Services in Winnipeg. In this capacity, she has oversight of all diversion programs run by TSA in Winnipeg, and is involved on the frontline of programs and services related to prostitution.

The persistent call to pray for prostitutes

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

God moves in surprising ways through the prayers of his people. Allow me to share how he did so in my life.

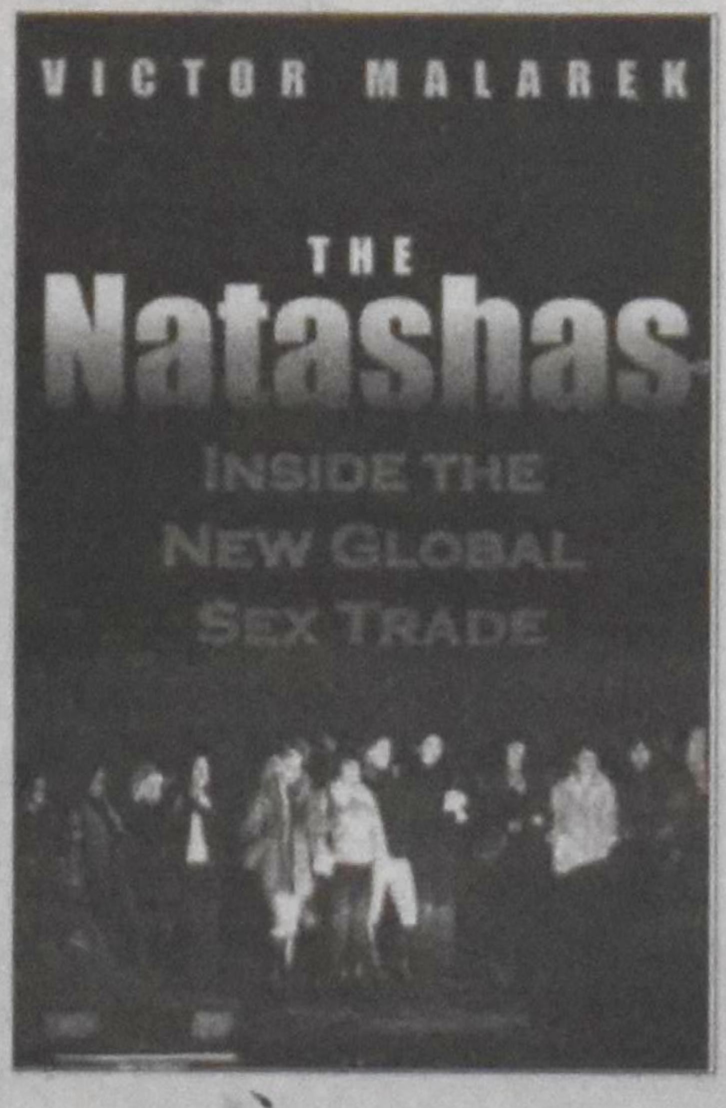
In October 2004, I read a copy of a Baptist women's magazine, *The Link and Visitor.* That issue featured an article on how Christians reach out to women involved in prostitution, and how global sex trafficking challenges the church to action.

I read a quote that has stuck in my mind since then. Lauren Bethel, from the Czech Republic wrote, "No young girl growing up dreams of becoming a prostitute."

I also learned about Viktor Malerak's book, *The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade*, and decided to read it. I felt shaken by what I read. In my naivete, I had no idea how many women are sold into sexual slavery. My thoughts turned to prostitutes in my own city, and I began to pray that God would begin a women's ministry in St. Catharines that would reach out to sex trade workers. Even as I prayed, I had no idea why God had led me to pray for something that was so outside of my realm of experience. But still the demand to pray persisted.

Soon after that, I attended a retreat at my church where we were challenged to name and pray about our holy discontent, in other words, those things that disturbed us about our world and that we wanted God to heal. That weekend I knew I had to keep praying for God to create a ministry to prostitutes in our city. So, once in awhile as I felt led to do so, I walked in the neighborhood of Queenston Street, one of the areas in my city, infamous because of the sex trade. At times, a friend joined me in my prayer walks.

In the months that I prayed, I had no idea that the church community another friend of mine belonged to had purchased a church building on Queenston Street. As an aside, for years this friend, Rita, and I had been in a prayer group for Beacon Christian Schools, and that is how we got to know each other.



One morning at our prayer meeting, she mentioned that her church community had purchased a building on Queenston Street. I felt led by the Holy Spirit to tell her that I had been praying for a ministry to prostitutes in downtown St. Catharines, and that I thought it was amazing that her church had bought a building right on Queenston Street. I must admit I felt sheepish telling Rita about my prayers. By telling her that I was praying, it seemed to make the vision more real. But how would it happen? I had no idea. I knew I couldn't do it.

In July 2007, I saw an article in our local newspaper that jumped out at me. A former prostitute would be speaking about creating avenues for different groups in our city to band together to reach out to sex trade workers. I attended the meeting with Mary, another friend. Together we prayed that God would create a ministry to prostitutes.

Imagine my surprise and joy when, in the fall of 2007, Rita mentioned in her prayer at our Beacon prayer group that her church was beginning a women's program, open to all women, including prostitutes. When she said that, I experienced a piercing joy, which I have come to recognize as the Holy Spirit's voice of affirmation, declaring, "Listen, Sonya!" I was listening, and I knew that God had moved to answer my prayers through people at Rita's church who began this innovative and risky program.

In March 2008, I was invited to share this story with Rita's congregation. For a long time I wondered why I was included on their journey for a short period – since I spoke to their congregation, I have never again felt led to walk through that neighborhood to pray. I realize now that God used me to encourage them and to show that he went ahead of them as they established their new ministry.

Our God moves through the prayers of his people, and he takes us to wonderful places and relationships when we obey the call to pray!

Creation/Family

Intelligent design or happenstance?

Running diagonally from the upper left to the lower right is the majestic glowing band of our Milky Way Galaxy's central plane. More distant than everything else, is the Andromeda galaxy, visible above the horizon toward on the lower left.

M. Louis Larson

The educational system today now teaches our children Darwin's evolution theory as fact as to how all of creation, including man, evolved from practically nothing. According to Darwin, monkeys, apemen, and fish were our ancestors. God has been left out of the picture entirely. But really, does that make any sense? Would they say that all the inventions man has designed came into being without intelligent creators?

Did you ever go to the seashore and take a barrel of sand and try to count the grains? It would be impossible, wouldn't it! Now think of the sun (which is a star). It would take millions of barrels of sand to make just one sun. How many suns (or stars) do you suppose are in our galaxy, which we call the Milky Way? Would you believe four billion? And that's not counting the billions of other heavenly bodies! It would be impossible to count them, wouldn't it?

Now that is just our galaxy. Billions of other such star-studded galaxies fill the universe, each galaxy being millions of light years away from the other. The whole gigantic group of each galaxy moves like a cartwheel, with intricate and accurate precision that outdoes the most complicated, but fallible, computer! Boggles the mind, doesn't it?

Our Milky Way galaxy

Now let's look at how big our "Milky Way" galaxy is. It takes our sun two million centuries just to make one circuit around this

A family resemblance

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

I climbed out of bed one morning and shuffled past the dresser. To my bleary-eyed surprise I saw my mother's face looking back from the mirror. I mean nothing derogatory here. I remember my mother as a nice-looking woman. (Okay, maybe not so much first thing in the morning.) I just didn't expect to see her features so clearly in my own reflection. They always told me as a child that I resembled Pa's side of the family. As a matter of fact, they said I was the spitting image of my paternal grandmother. Given her reputation as a difficult woman, I often wondered if looking like her was a good thing.

I never met any of my grandparents, but I did study the few photographs we had around the house. My parents agreed that my brother, Jim, favored our maternal Oma. She was a pleasant looking woman, somewhat heavyset, smiling in all the pictures, a friendly light in her eyes. This Oma sent parcels from Germany every Christmas, packed with coffee and chocolate, a new outfit for my favorite doll and a new dress or sweater for me. How she managed to send clothing that was just the right size remains a mystery. She had never set eyes on me, but the gifts she sent always fit as if made for me. Every other week her letters arrived, neatly written with an old fashioned fountain pen on "air mail" paper, thin as tissue. Never did a birthday pass for any of us without a card from Oma.

She had been widowed shortly after my mother was born, her husband a victim of polio. A single parent long before it was fashionable, Oma provided for herself and my mom by working in a factory during the day and dressmaking for wealthy clients in the evenings. Just before WWII broke out, Oma married a widowed gentleman with two sons, and my mother, then a teenager, became part of a blended family.

After the war my parents married and lived in two rooms of Oma and Opa's apartment. But my father had vowed during the war that he would leave Germany, and when my brother was four years-old, they began immigration to Canada. It broke my mother's heart to leave her mom behind.

The summer that I turned eight, ten years after Ma had left Germany, she planned to take Jimmy and me for a visit. I would finally meet the Oma who had loved me so well from afar. Two days before our departure Oma died suddenly of a heart attack. They delayed her funeral so that we could attend. In the weeks that followed, we discovered stashes of presents all through the apartment. Obviously Oma had been excited about our visit. I still have a silver fountain pen with my name engraved on the cap – a final gift from a woman who loved to give.

My other Oma was a different story. As a child my father suffered considerable abuse at the hands of his father. As an adult, his parents legally disowned him when he married my mom. Staunch Catholics in a small town in southern Germany, they could not accept a Protestant, a refugee from a bombed out northern city, as their daughter-in-law. For years they had no contact. Then after my grandfather died, my father began writing to his mother once a month. She would write back, but only to him, never mentioning my mother or the two of us kids. A year before my father died, more than twenty years after he came to Canada, he returned to Germany for the first time and made peace with his mother.

Still, my father told me positive things about his mother. She came from a wealthy and influential family. When she married my grandfather, a blacksmith, her parents disowned her. In those days, my father explained, one didn't marry out of one's class. It was scandalous to marry someone from a different village, let alone someone from another religion. My grandfather, though a tyrant to his son, worked hard to earn the respect of the townsfolk, eventually becoming "Bürgermeister" (the mayor). His family was highly regarded in the church, with a couple of aunts who were nuns and an uncle who was a priest. They fully expected my father to become either a priest or a blacksmith. His choice to leave the village and marry a "foreigner" was outrageous.

Pictures of this Oma showed a thin, serious-looking woman, with wispy grey hair pulled tightly back. Surprisingly strong for such a spindly lady and undeniably stubborn, she managed to live through two bouts of breast cancer as a young woman and survived colorectal cancer in her 70s. She died of old age in her 90s. After my father passed away, she wrote now and then to my mother. Their relationship was never warm and fuzzy, but my mother did respond to Oma's letters and even sent her the occasional photograph of our family life and her great-grandchildren.

It's interesting how these people, none of whom I ever met, impacted my life. It makes me especially thankful that my own children have had the opportunity to personally know and enjoy most of their grandparents. Jack's mom and dad have lived close by since our children were little and have always been part of their lives. Although my mom lived farther away, we visited her regularly and she always showered them with treats. My father died before I was married, but I've made sure to tell my kids stories of his life and personality. Still, I wish they could have met him.

I find great pleasure in looking at my children to see the family resemblance. All three of them have inherited the lovely full eyebrows and thick lashes from Jack's side of the gene pool. I see my father's facial expression in the set of James' jaw line and the colour of his eyes. Stephanie has a modified version of my mother's turned-up nose, but stands and walks like her dad. Jessica has the height and build of my father's family, but her face bears the same contours as my mother-in-law's.

Sometimes I daydream about what James and Willene's baby will look like. Will she be a slender little girl, with bright eyes and delicate hands like her mom? Or maybe he'll be a rough and tumble little guy with thick blonde hair and strong arms like his dad? What a joy to think that I can be a part of this child's life, and that we will get to know each other personally. And I know that when I hold my grandchild for the first time, I'll see that family resemblance common to all newborns – the image of the One who made them, clearly visible in the radiance of a brand new life – the convergence of generations past wrapped up in the hopes and promises of the future, ours to behold and enjoy, a precious gift from the Father of us all.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hm-vanderslikke@ hotmail.com

Creation/Faith

galaxy. The nearest star to earth (besides our sun) is an estimated 25 million of millions miles away. It would take a jet plane six million years to fly that distance.

The average star is a million times larger than our earth. Yet what appears to be one star to the naked eye may be several thousand stars clustered together. Although more than 1500 million stars have been seen and photographed by astronomers, the heavens are actually far more filled with space than with stars. In fact, at least 99 percent of the universe is nothing but space.

All stars are true suns like our sun, but since the nearest neighboring star to our sun is 250 thousand times farther away from earth, ours is the one that gives us light and heat. God gave us just the right sun too, for many stars are much more luminous than our sun, and would quickly burn the earth to a crisp if they were as near as our sun! Not all stars are as stable as our sun but some flare up and die down. The sun God gave us is consistent.

Our amazing solar system

At least ten planets revolve around our sun, which is at the center of our solar system. Our earth is the third planet from the sun. It is the ideal distance from the sun for the thriving of life. Its size is just right to give us the right amount of heat and light. God put life and man on the only planet in this solar system that could sustain them. And the earth does that in a marvelous fashion.

Since the Creator made our sun 700 times more massive than the rest of our Solar System combined, it exerts the main gravitational pull on the other bodies of the group. Gravitation keeps the planets revolving in orderly fashion around the sun. It makes our earth a hug magnetic ball, thus holding us and everything else in it protective grip. Who put the law of gravitation into effect in the entire universe? This phenomenon could scarcely have been an accident of nature!

The sun provides us with heat, light, power, beneficial rays, and an orbital hub. Traveling through bitterest cold some 93 million miles, its heat arrives on earth at just the right temperature to warm us. It is a self-regulating furnace made by the finest Craftsman that ever existed.

Without the sun all life would quickly disappear from the earth. Plants would not perform their photosynthetic processes, without which both they and animal life would die, for the sun is the source of all energy for life, working through the food chain that starts with green plants. The earth would become a frozen waste!

Earth from space

The moons that revolved around the other planets are just as dead and lifeless as ours. Some of them revolve in one direction, some in another; yet the solar system works perfectly with no collisions of moons or planets. According to Colossians 1:13-17, all things are held together by God the Son.

If our moon were large or closer to us, tides would continually wreck our harbors and submerge our coastal plains. If it were farther away and smaller, the tides would not be strong enough to cleanse our harbors or rejuvenate the waters of our oceans. The ocean breakers caused by the tides provide the life in the sea with oxygen by aerating the water. Thus our moon plays an integral part in life on our earth and was put near our earth by God in his infinite wisdom.

The most amazing thing of all

Now if your mind isn't already boggled by the wonder of the universe God made, consider this stunning fact in the light of God's tremendous creation: This great Creator loved us so much that he came to earth in the form of his Son, Jesus Christ (God the Son), to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven and spend a glorious eternity with him! The Bible declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God….And the Word became flesh" (John 1:1, 14).

God sent this message to us through his prophet Isaiah over 2700 years ago: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." That is Jesus Christ.

How can we reject such great love from such a great Creator?

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

Faith in God or in "SOMEBODY ELSE"

A few months ago I wrote a column for the C.C. straight from the heart. It was after my mother had her fourth stroke and lost her eyesight and after I heard that none of Harry der Nederlanden's cancer treatments were effective. I thought maybe it was time I came out of the closet and admitted I stopped believing certain aspects about God. I eventually tore up my article and deleted it from my computer. All of this I now regret because we don't often write from the heart. But I will try again.

Years ago I read "A Grief Observed" by C.S. Lewis and saw, what continues to be my favourite film, Shadowlands. It's my favourite film because it gave us a "slice of life" that was so human – it was heartbreaking. Some say C.S. Lewis lost his faith after his wife died. Others fervently deny this. The point is, if we are hit often enough by darts to the heart, we experience a reality check about life. We suddenly realize there is nothing and possibly more than attending church every Sunday for the sake of our own personal salvation! We also begin to realize there is nothing harder than *living out* the gospel, especially in terms of caring for the sick, the elderly, the widows and the fatherless. Even Rick Warren, author of the hugely successful *A Purpose Driven Life*, is presently finding it is much easier to "save souls" than to marshall believers to help him eradicate world poverty!

It's life

At this time, my mother is 89 and soon to be 90. As I have written before, she never wanted to become this old. She preferred to have an active life and pass on to glory in her sleep. Unfortunately, so far it is not to be. Her late aging is filled with hardships and pain. But if I learned anything from my mother's life is that many of the painful things that happen to us is simply 'life.' This is not a popular stance. We too often believe God is stirring the pot of "calculated" human pain and misery to encourage us to stay faithful to him and learn the lessons of life.

In terms of our editor, Harry Der Nederlanden and his family, I am sure they had over 1,000 people praying for them every day. That means God heard Harry and his family's names over 1,000 times every day. If we think about it – how can anyone turn a deaf ear to all these prayers? From my perspective, Harry's illness and my mother's ongoing suffering is simply 'life.' Whatever lessons we choose to learn from our sorrows is also simply life. And, incredibly as this may sound, I am strangely at peace with understanding life this way.

Precisely two decades ago, I cut out a newspaper clipping titled "Believe in whatever you like, I put my faith in Somebody Else." The column was written by the crusty and previously atheist – Denny Boyd. He was a regular writer for *The Vancouver Sun* for many years. He finally admitted his "conversion" some five years ago (from the time the column was written) involved some serious letting go. He writes "after a lifetime of running the world, I realized one morning that I had not made the tide come in on the beach in front of my place…yet there it was, in. And the sun was up and blazing. I hadn't left a wake-up call for Mr. Sun. So who had?" And so, Deny Boyd realized "the universe could function without my supervision. I could step down as the west coast distributor of life, light and wisdom and turn my route over to – Somebody Else." He further wrote, "I can't put a face to the name, but Somebody Else is a very interesting presence, a prime mover that created the universe out of a speck of light, invented oregano for spaghetti sauce, causes babies to smell wonderful, decided that birds should sing and, I am dead certain, makes tides rise and fall."

Of course, there is a lot more in his column I could paraphrase, but for now suffice it to say I do not believe God allows bad things to happen to good people because he has a specific agenda in mind for them and their families. Should I be wrong I would have to say… "Believe in whatever you like, I will put my faith in Somebody Else, because I believe Somebody Else would never play cat and mouse with my mother or Harry, Rose and their family!

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca

Story

Turkey dog

Daphne Simpkins

"What are you doing for Thanksgiving?" Mildred Budge asked the newest member of the Lunch Bunch, which was something of a secret society of veteran church ladies that had been meeting once a month for Sunday lunch for years. Members had come and gone (mostly to their graves), but the Lunch Bunch as an entity had outlasted many preachers, even the ones who preached against eating out on Sunday.

Mildred Budge agreed with preachers about not causing other people to work by eating out on Sundays, but she ate out anyway. It was a compromise in her faith that she believed proved she was in the reformed tradition but had avoided becoming legalistic.

Mildred figured that love expressed through fellowship after church on Sunday covered the potential trespass elements of eating out which no matter how you looked at it didn't really fit into the category of pulling a cow or an ox out of the mud (one of the approved reasons for not resting completely on Sunday), but it worked for Mildred and this new member of the Lunch Bunch, Betty Callender of whom Mildred had just asked an entirely inappropriate question. "What are you doing for Thanksgiving dinner?"

Unless you know a woman very well and best of all the answer, a seasoned church lady does not casually ask another older single veteran church lady what she is doing for Thanksgiving. There are many reasons why.

Quite simply, the question indelicately points out her aloneness.

More troubling, the question implies that you are about to invite her to your house; and one more time, Mildred had decided that she wasn't cooking a big meal for Thanksgiving and inviting her gal pals over. No, each year she now accepted one of the invitations that came her way from people who saw her as someone who shouldn't be eating alone. Thanksgiving with acquaintances was Mildred's newest Thanksgiving tradition.

Betty, an athletic older woman who was famous for working out with weights at Gold's Gym (she had muscles in her triceps and everything), stared distantly out in space – her eyes a luminous, lucid blue – and said, "I would like to be eating a turkey dog on Thanksgiving."

"That would be a hot dog made out of turkey?" Mildred confirmed, wondering if she needed to cancel her plans and invite Betty over to her house anyway no matter how much work it was.

Betty collected herself, read Mildred's mind, and added quickly, "Don't worry about me. I have a few Thanksgiving invitations, but I have not chosen which one to accept." Betty inhaled deeply, then sighed. Her usual serene expression wavered as she signaled to the waiter that she was ready for her check. Mildred motioned, 'Me, too.' The rest of the Lunch Bunchers had already left for their Sunday afternoon naps. Only Betty and Mildred were lingering, getting to know one another.

Betty drew her shoulders back and vowed, "But I will accept an invitation. One must participate."

"That's right," Mildred concurred.

"I'd so much rather stay home on Thanksgiving day, eat a turkey dog, and clean out a closet," Betty confessed recklessly, and then looked about to see if anyone had overheard. No one cared.

"Wouldn't you though?" Mildred replied. "Or enjoy a movie festival starring Eve Arden or Thelma Ritter." Mildred Budge had a real fondness for women who had played good-natured, sensible sturdy sidekicks to the more glamorous female lead characters.

The two women nodded in sympathetic understanding, for each was now viewed by various strata in the social world as a person in need of friends and family for the holidays, and neither woman saw herself that way – not even a little bit. But they were skilled in navigating the perceptions of others, even other Christians who took the occasion of the holidays to do a good work on them by inviting them over so they wouldn't be alone.

After accepting an invitation, one was often asked to bring a dish, or – if not – was expected to baby-sit while other guests of child-bearing age finished eating the prolonged meal or adjourned to the TV room to watch The Game. Once that started, a single older woman who had been invited over could find herself babysitting until late evening. When the new tradition had begun, a family had actually gone off to a movie and left Mildred at their house with four small children. *"You're a retired teacher. This probably feels like home to you."*

Since then, Mildred always, always took a covered dish, and parked her car where she couldn't be boxed in. When possible, she chose a chair at the dining table nearest the front door.

"How about you?" Betty asked, having been given permission to break the rule of silence by having it already broken on her.

"I'm taking cornbread stuffing to a rather large social gathering. It won't be so bad," Mildred said without conviction.

"Are you supposed to take the gravy, too?" Betty asked, curious. Using a frosty purple-pink lipstick she applied it without looking in a mirror. Mildred did the same with her Ruby Woo – her signature shade of red.

"Oh, I was told explicitly and very loudly –"

"As if you were deaf," Betty interjected, putting her lipstick away.

Mildred nodded, "Not to use cream of mushroom soup either."

"How else does one make gravy without cream of mushroom soup?" Betty asked. She folded her napkin on the table and nodded discreetly to the hovering waiter that he could take her money. Mildred had laid down cash as well.

The waiter discreetly collected their money, and topped off their water glasses without asking. "No rush, girls. Take your time," he murmured.

Mildred fished out an extra dollar to add to the tip for that courtesy, explaining at the same time, "They want real giblet gravy made with cornstarch and turkey drippings which will be tricky because I'm not cooking the turkey."

"That is problematic since giblets come with the turkey," Betty agreed, wrinkling her nose. "I don't care for giblets. All those little indistinguishable parts can be very unappealing." She pushed back her chair, readying herself to leave.

"I have been researching gravy, and it appears that the secret to making good giblet gravy is to boil an egg and slice it up in there with the giblets. It kind of disguises things," Mildred reported.

"I'll remember that," Betty replied, though the piece of information was not filed in that part of her brain that stored the really important information. It was sent to the more distant memory bank where one kept information about how to paddle a life raft if one ever finds oneself in a flood. "I guess I'll have to say yes to someone, " Betty added with fortitude as she stood up.

"You will," Mildred concurred, taking a deep breath. "But if you wait long enough, all of the traditional side dishes will have been assigned to others, and then you can take what you like to cook. It's a good idea to take something," Mildred urged, wondering if Betty understood about the baby-sitting problem. Mildred didn't know yet exactly how long Betty had been on her own. She was a widow.

"That would be a turkey dog," Betty said impishly. "Although I suspect I will just take my cranberry sauce made with Grand Marnier."

"Ah, you like to torment the teetolers," Mildred said with a grin.

"Just a smidge," Betty said. "But all of the alcohol burns off," she said with a shrug.

"Pity," Mildred replied. She stood up too.

They navigated their way through the restaurant towards their respective vehicles.

When they exited sunlight flooded them. They blinked while reaching for matching pairs of sunshades that fit over their respective eyeglasses. (All the Lunch Bunch girls wore them!)

They hesitated before parting – each woman alone with her notions about the day ahead and the days ahead. Mildred paused to consider why she still said yes to invitations that were not exactly fun, and knew instantly that it was because she was – in truth just as others saw her – alone, and she did prefer to be with others.

Unfortunately, dining with acquaintances reminded her acutely of the people she loved best who had passed on and were no longer eating at her own carefully laid-out dining room table, smiling, and teasing her about cooking with sherry or Grand Marnier. The emotional pall that hovered throughout the holidays threatened to descend.

"Tell me about that turkey dog," Mildred asked, wondering if it was too late to invite Betty to her house for an easy meal made out of turkey dogs. She envisioned open-faced turkey dog sandwiches covered with cream of mushroom soup and watching a Thelma Ritter festival beginning with "Rear Window."

"It is very nice to be remembered and asked," Mildred said with determination.

"Oh, but I miss my husband," Betty confessed softly. Then her shoulders went back again as if she remembered that she must stand up. Stand up very tall. "That was then; this is now," Betty declared, and Mildred knew that her new friend had walked a million miles on that mantra.

"Sometimes there is laughter at the table," Mildred reminded her.

Betty smiled with discipline. "Yes, sometimes there is laughter."

"Look on the bright side." Mildred urged, readying her car keys. "When you get home afterwards, you could still clean out the closet."

"It is something to look forward to," Betty concurred with an honest laugh. "And I shall look forward to it and to the many other daily tasks still set before us – with – " she paused to consider the truth, and then added, "Thanksgiving."

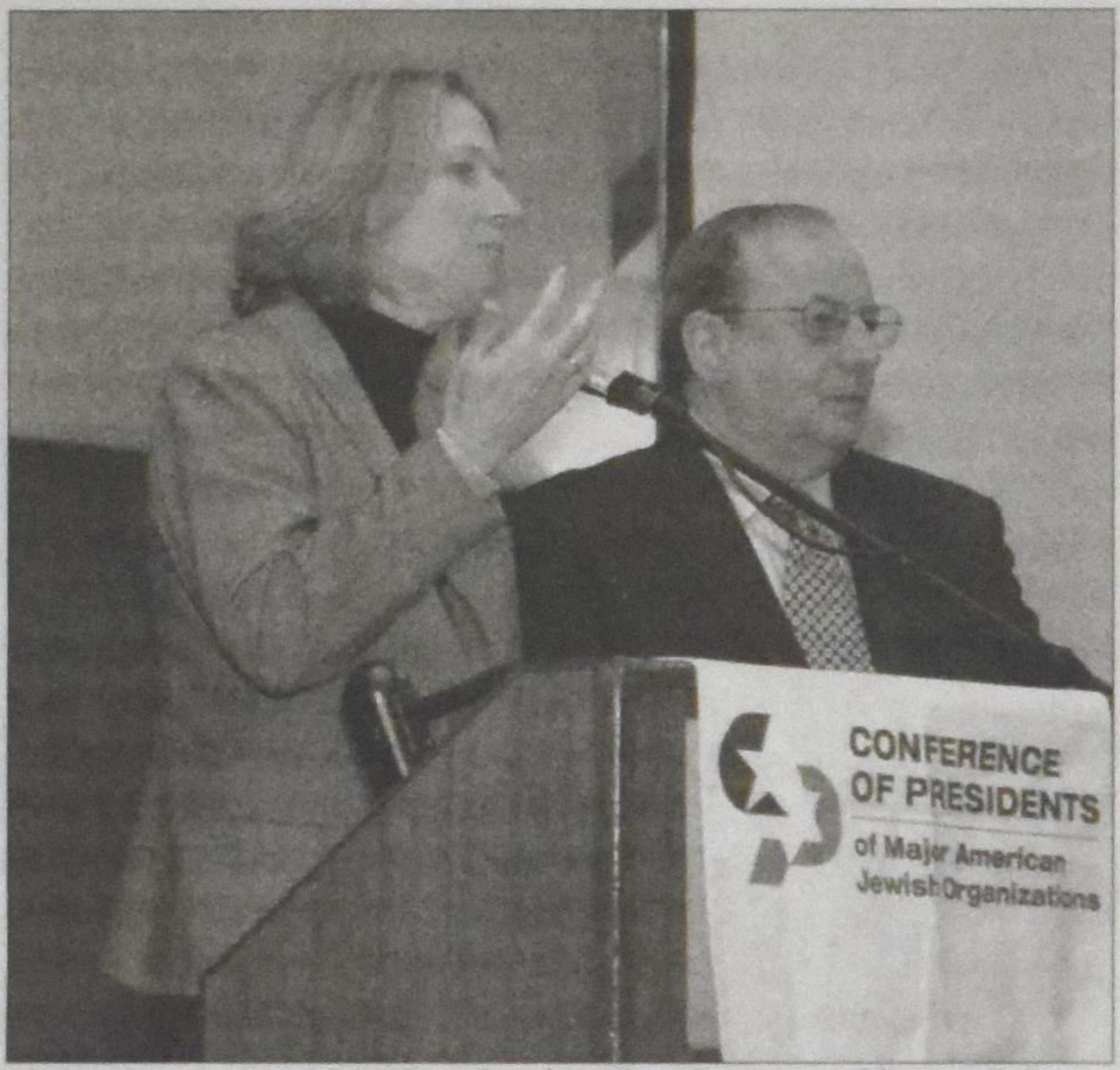
Can Livni clean up Israeli politics?

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni won the Kadima Party primary to replace Ehud Olmert who has been beset by corruption charges.

Jerusalem – Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni set her sights Thursday on taking the office of prime minister and got started working on building a new coalition government.

But an official count released after Wednesday's Kadima Party primary showed her besting her closest competitor, Shaul Mofaz, by just one percentage point, leaving her with a less decisive mandate to lead Israel's ruling party. Nonetheless, Ms. Livni strode into the political limelight as if that made no difference.

Livni said her party's choice showed that today "there is a different kind of politics. For a very long time I was told there was no such thing, and today Kadima proved that there is."



Tzipi Livni at a 2006 Leadership Conference addressed the delegation about relations with the Palestinians.

The language of political change – which has drawn comparisons to Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's campaign – has permeated Livni's lingo as she has moves from behind-the-scenes power broker to front-page policymaker. And unlike most of Israel's politicos across the ideological spectrum, she is one of the few with a squeaky-clean reputation.

Livni has forged strong working relationships with her Palestinian counterparts in the renewed peace process, which began in Annapolis, Md., last year. On the domestic front, she has created much excitement because she could be only the second woman in Israel's history to become prime minister.

But as for donning the mantle of the politics of change, many here warn against expectations of sweeping progress on any of the main issues in the immediate future.

Besides the complications existent in both the Israeli and Palestinian political scenes – as well as the tendency of both sides to want to wait and see who will be the next US president before moving ahead on any agreement – Livni is not the equivalent of someone coming from "outside the Beltway" to change the face of politics.

"Livni is not exactly our Obama," says Aluf Benn, a columnist and diplomatic editor of Haaretz, Israel's leading intellectual daily. "She's been [Ehud] Olmert's No. 2 for two years, and she spent five years in [Ariel] Sharon's government. She's not exactly coming from nowhere. She's been in the system; she was born into it," he says, referring to Livni's lineage.

Her parents were members of the Irgun, a hard-line Zionist militia, which in Israel is something akin to having come over with the Mayflower or having fought in the American Revolution.

"She campaigned on change – from Olmert," Mr. Benn says. "But to say, 'she's our Obama,' that she represents real change, is overblown." When it comes to the feasibility of peacemaking, he notes, the same internal divisions among the two peoples remain largely unchanged.

"We have the same limitations on our side," Benn adds. "The fundamental problems on the Palestinian side are also the same, with Hamas in charge of Gaza and Fatah barely holding onto security in the West Bank."

In many corners of the Middle East, Livni has a reputation as a moderate, levelheaded foreign minister. In contrast, Mr. Mofaz is deeply disliked by many Palestinians due to the fact that he served as army chief-of-staff during the Al Aqsa Intifada and he is seen as a leader of the camp in Israel that backs a military strike on Iran's developing nuclear program.

Not since the election of Golda Meir in 1969 has Israel put a woman in its top office. But like Meir, who was loved abroad but had many foes at home, Livni may face a shaky start due to the slenderness of her win over Mofaz, a much more hawkish candidate who presents the archetypal picture of the kind of person Israelis usually choose when they are worried about the prospect of another war. Israeli voters have shown a strong tendency toward electing former military brass of many stripes.

Livni, however, earned an image as someone who understands Israel's complex security challenges in the region because she was an officer for the Mossad, Israel's spy agency.

"The national mission ... is to create stability quickly," Livni told reporters outside her Tel Aviv home at dawn. "On the level of government in Israel, we have to deal with difficult threats."

Livni's first order of business is forming a coalition government, always a complicated puzzle in Israel. Once Mr. Olmert officially resigns, the coalition's government dissolves. But Olmert is expected to remain as a caretaker leader until a new coalition is approved. Livni will have 42 days to assemble a new one, and if she does she will likely be the next prime minister. If she can't, new elections will be held early next year.

Challenges are already confronting her. Shas, one of the coalition partners in the government for many years, says it won't join a government that will agree to divide Jerusalem. The disputed city is governed by Israel but claimed by Palestinians as their capital as well; Israel occupied East Jerusalem in the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967.

"The situation is very complex right now," says Tel Aviv University professor Reuven Pedhatzur. "Every party will come along with their demands: Shas on Jerusalem and demanding more funds for their children. Labor will want something, maybe Likud will want something else."

Livni is less known for wheeling and dealing and more for integrity, and that may make it hard for her to survive. "I'm not sure that she's willing to make these kinds of promises to Shas, or to any party," says Mr. Pedhatzur. "For this, and for many reasons, I cannot see any real progress until the next elections, and there will be elections next year."

By Ilene R. Prusher, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Tzipi Livni meets with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice Feb. 14, 2008 (AP Photo)

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Pentecost

The other Comforter

And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Counselor
to be with you forever

John 14:16

Among all the Christian celebrations the least well known, understood or enjoyed is the feast of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is a truly 'spiritual' feast and offers few details for our imagination.

Christmas offers many stories to share with your children. There is the baby in the manger, the shepherds with the lambs, the angels and wise men, the visit to the Temple and the flight to Egypt, to name just a few. Similarly, on Easter, one can imagine the sorrowful women visiting the grave, the lonely wandering of Mary Magdalene, the angels at the open grave, the travellers to Emmaeus, Jesus' entry through closed doors, and a doubting Thomas invited to place his finger in Jesus' side.

These details stir our imaginations. They provide lots of material for discussions, and art can be produced to portray these events in drawings and paintings.

They provide movement, change and a wealth of variety of figures which come alive in our imagination and also for our congregation.

Pentecost provides a very different scenario. Now we find people in and outside an upper room. There is a strange sound, unusual flashes of light, speech that sounds confused, but which nevertheless breaks through language barriers, and the climax of a sermon praising God's great deeds.

These details usually don't inspire our imagination. There are no grand events to be portrayed by artists, and it is difficult for our children to grasp. It offers little material for splendid sermons. Portrayal of Pentecost in the arts ends mostly in failure.

But, we hasten to add, it had to be that way. Pentecost is not less in value than Christmas or Easter, because its spiritual focus places it beyond the reach of our common imagination.

Pentecost is the most noble of the three feast days, but only for those who have tasted the noble gifts of the Lord in the outpouring of his Spirit. Only those who have received the "first fruit of the Spirit" [Rom. 8:23] can truly rejoice on this feast day of the Spirit.

Pentecost,(1509-1511),woodcut by Albrecht Dürer

A 'two-in-one' God as Father and Son would be much simpler for them to worship and adore, than the marvel of the triune God as he is worshipped by all who reflect more intently on the mystery. For such 'two-in-one' teaching is like a tree trunk without roots, like the mumbling of unintelligible words. It is not a dogma of the church, for dogma means conscious reflection on the Eternal One, and deserves the name only when it is practised in the very depth of our soul and being. To know God, the Eternal One as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; to rejoice in him and enjoy him who first loved us – such is the true, sincere and God-inspired confession of the Trinity. Such faith can not be destroyed by logic or doubt.

To arrive at such a point we must understand the 'misery' for which the Comforter is sent, as something more than for the pain of a personal setback, or an attack of conscience, or even the fear of hell.

When Jesus speaks about the Spirit, whom he will send us from the Father, he calls him *another Comforter*. This means that the Son thinks also of himself as a Comforter, but one who would remain only for a while and then leave again. That's why he promised that they would receive *another* Comforter, different from himself. This new Comforter would not leave, but would remain with them forever.

We must not think that the new Comforter came only to console the disciples who would miss Jesus. That's not what Jesus meant and not what he said. To regard the Comforter as no more than a temporary substitute for Jesus demeans the Spirit, radically removes the blessing of Pentecost, and robs God the Holy Spirit of his honour.

For the Holy Spirit too is God. He is not a power, light, or gift, but a divine Person.

His majesty is nothing less than that of the Son, for he is equal to the Son in glory and timelessness. There is nothing temporal about his presence, for he shares the eternal being with the Son and the Father.

Clearly, the Son comes first and the Spirit comes after him to 'comfort' the Father's children.

But can one 'comfort' those who rejoice; 'comfort' those who do not mourn; 'comfort' those who do not admit to their sorrow, nor even recognize the misery that surrounds them like a stream? And, indeed, what do the common multitudes, or even the confessing multitudes know about their 'misery'?

For most people 'misery' comes when things go wrong, when they struggle with worry or illness, when they lose some possession or, worse, when they lose someone who is close to them through death.

That's why they love the confession that their 'Father in Heaven' fills their pantry, restores their health, and comforts them in their final days.

For those who live on a deeper level, 'misery' comes from the pressures of a sinful life. Their conscience afflicts them, and they are tormented by the question of 'where they might spend eternity'. They do not live out of love but in fear, and this fear drives them to accept the salvation of the cross, confess the Son who saved them from their sins through his death on that cross, and who also opened the heavens when he rose from the grave.

That's as far as they go. What more could they ask for?

No, to understand the true misery, the depth of sorrow and divine focus of work for the Comforter we must turn to the theme of Divine Love.

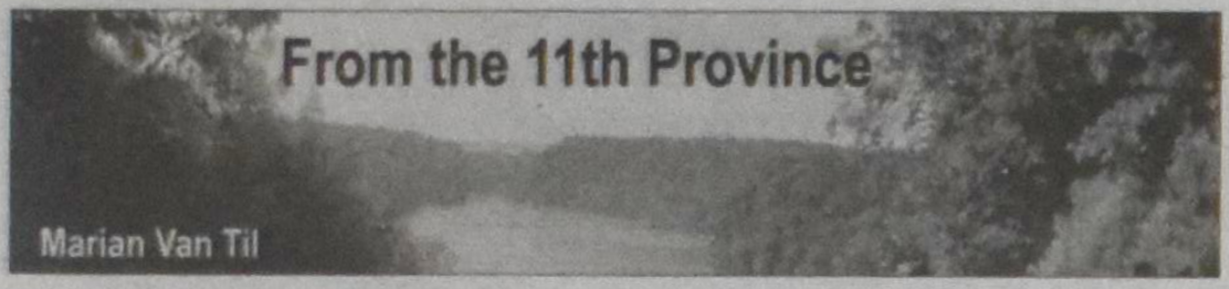
God is Love. That's why God's work on earth does not rest until "love" is the law for life in his kingdom. Indeed, the grandest imagination cannot begin to guess the glory we will experience once the waters of eternal love fall on us as a stream to drench all that have eternal life.

God is Love. That's why even in our feeble imitations in marriage, friendship or sexual intimacy we can yet see a kernel of the all encompassing power of the divine love of God.

Continued in October 13 issue

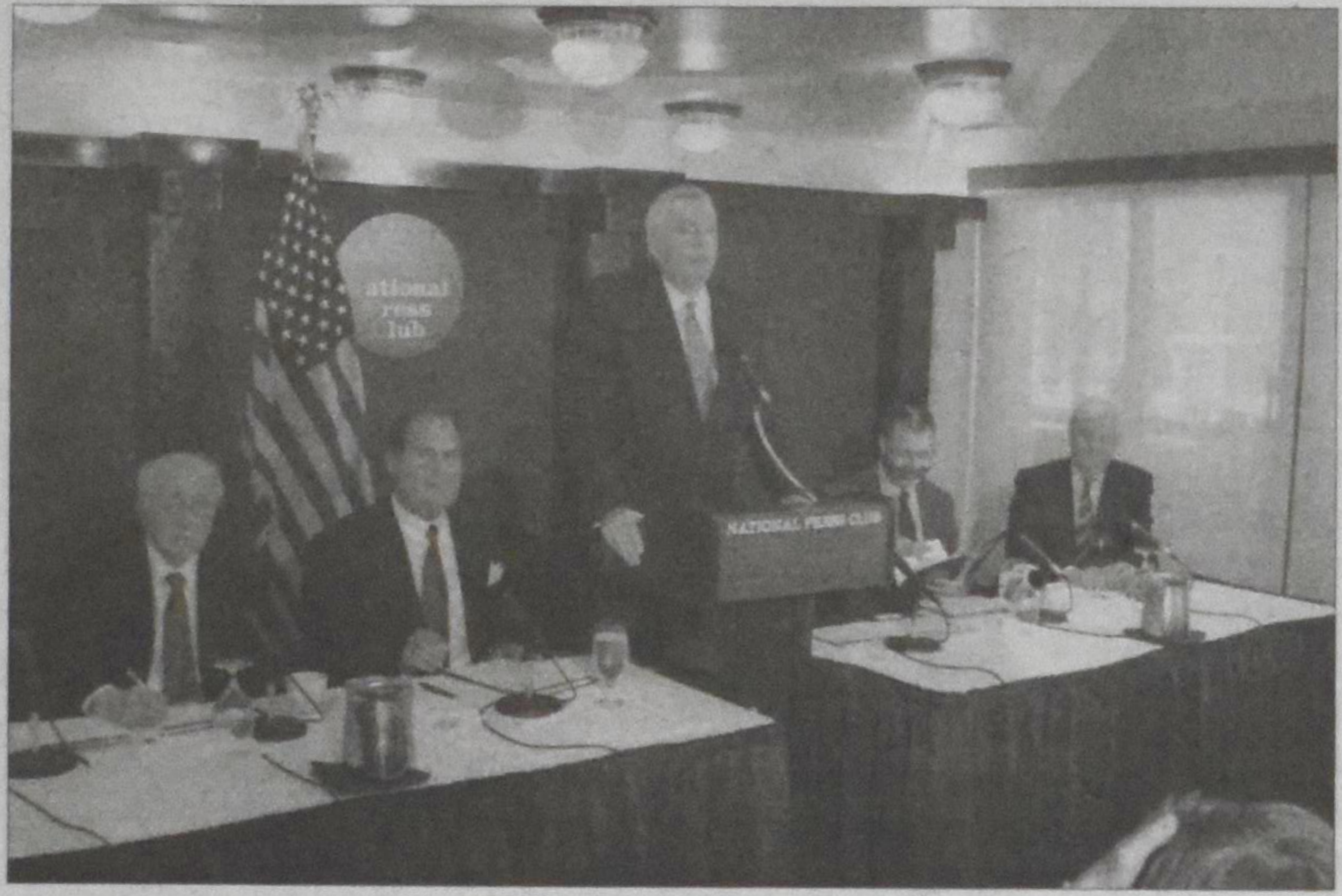
Note: *This is part of a series of meditations by Abraham Kuyper translated by Jack van Meggelen.*

Reflections



An Evangelical Manifesto (I)

The implications of being evangelical, the need for reformation



Dr. Richard Mouw, president and professor of Christian Philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary; Dr. John Huffman, Jr., senior pastor of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, Calif., and board chair of Christianity Today International; Larry Ross, president of A. Larry Ross Communications and news conference moderator; David Neff, editor-in-chief and vice president, Christianity Today Media Group; and Dr. Os Guinness, author of numerous books, including "A Case for Civility," at the "An Evangelical Manifesto" press conference on May 7, 2008.

PHOTO CREDIT: Robert Burgess

On May 7 of this year nine evangelical leaders in the U.S. held a press conference to present *An Evangelical Manifesto* to America and the world, to fellow Christians and to other faith communities (and those who insist they have no faith).

The Manifesto defines itself and its purpose as "an open declaration of who Evangelicals are and what they stand for." It was drafted and published by "a representative group of Evangelical leaders who do not claim to speak for all Evangelicals, but who invite all other Evangelicals to stand with them and help clarify what Evangelical means in light of 'confusions within and the consternation without' the movement." The signers said they "are not out to attack or exclude anyone, but to rally and to call for reform."

A couple of weeks ago I received a request from one of my old Dordt professors (he's not particularly "old," but you know what I mean!) asking if I would take a look at the Manifesto, particularly since Richard Mouw is one of it's authors and signees. And because, as the professor said, the Manifesto "apparently challenges the religious right to get off their hot button issues and look at the larger picture of justice in North America."

I thought the professor's suggestion was a good one (I'm always looking for good column ideas; if you have one, incidentally, feel free to forward it to me). As I began looking at the details of the lengthy Manifesto, I realized that it is particularly timely right now when both the U.S. and Canada are in a campaign period leading up to major elections.

A Reformed presence

Richard Mouw is well known in Christian Reformed circles. He taught philosophy at Calvin College for 17 years, was a visiting professor at the Free University in Amsterdam and then went to Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, first to teach philosophy again, then to take over as president – his current position. He is a keen interpreter of contemporary culture and has written extensively about social justice. Among his handful of insightful, readable books are *Praying at Burger King* (2007), *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport: Making Connections in Today's World* (2004) and *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (2002).

Mouw is Reformed but he has no problem identifying himself as an evangelical, and neither should we: the Manifesto rightly describes evangelicals as "Christians who define themselves, their faith, and their lives according to the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth." That's not to say, of course, that we C.C. readers should cease also calling ourselves Calvinists and understanding ourselves to be Reformed. We *do* think of ourselves as Reformed and perhaps *not* as evangelicals. We no doubt don't want to be identified with the negative stereotypes much of the press and academia like to put forward in defining evangelicals. (That's perhaps more true in the U.S. than in Canada, though not by much.)

The right to define ourselves

And so, speaking to evangelicals, the first aim of the Manifesto is: ***"We must reaffirm our identity."*** It explains: "Behind this affirmation is the awareness that identity is powerful and precious to groups as well as to individuals. Identity is central to a classical liberal understanding of freedom. There are grave dangers in identity politics, but we insist that we ourselves, and not scholars, the press, or public opinion, have the right to say who we understand ourselves to be. We are who we say we are, and we resist all attempts to explain us in terms of our 'true' motives and our 'real' agenda."

The Manifesto, being also addressed to people of other faiths and people who believe or say they have no faith, makes use of that "right" to define one's own group. I can't help but feel that it is particularly talking to the secular press, who have, on the whole, amplified and distorted evangelical sins and defined (and often sneered at) evangelicals in starkly negative terms.

So the Manifesto explains at length where evangelicals have come from – how the distinctions we affirm are believed as biblical truths which were "recovered by the Protestant Reformation, sustained in many subsequent movements of revival and renewal, and vital for a sure and saving knowledge of God – in short, beliefs that are true to the Good News of Jesus."

The document then spells out at length what evangelicals believe in terms of theology, after which it readily acknowledges "that we repeatedly fail to live up to our high calling, and all too often illustrate the truth of our own doctrine of sin."

Seven implications

The Manifesto sees seven implications in the way it defines evangelicals:

1. *To be evangelical is to hold a belief that is also a devotion.*

2. *Evangelical belief and devotion is expressed as much in our worship and in our deeds as in our creeds.*

3. *Evangelicals are followers of Jesus in away that is not limited to certain churches or contained by a definable movement.*

4. *Evangelicalism must be defined theologically and not politically; confessionally and not culturally.*

5. *The evangelical message, "good news" by definition, is overwhelmingly positive, and always positive before it is negative.*

6. *Evangelicalism should be distinguished from two opposite tendencies to which Protestantism has been prone: liberal revisionism and conservative fundamentalism.*

7. *Evangelicalism is distinctive for the way it looks equally to both the past and the future.*

Avoiding a 'theocracy'

Number 4 in that list may raise an eyebrow or two; or at least, it's the statement of the seven that is most open to interpretation – and the one that most clearly attempts to combat the perception that (especially American) evangelicals are people who are intent on establishing a "political theocracy" if they could. That vision of theocracy makes secularists shudder with fear and loathing. However erroneous (not to mention unrealistic) that picture is, I have by now read dozens of news stories that raise that spectre. It is conjured up almost immediately whenever Christian candidates assert that their faith will or should or must have an impact on the decisions they would make in their elected positions.

So how does the Manifesto itself speak about being defined as "theological, not political" and "confessional, not cultural"? It does so succinctly at first; perhaps a little too succinctly. But later it offers much critique when it asserts that ***we must rethink our place in public life***.

Above all else, evangelicalism is a commitment and devotion to the work, person and teaching of Jesus Christ and a "dedication to his lordship above all other earthly powers, allegiances and loyalties." That may be small comfort to non-Christians who are worried about exactly that: Christians in politics who believe that they must put their dedication to Christ above all other loyalties. They just don't "get" that. And unfortunately, a lot of evangelicals in politics (including Catholic evangelicals) don't quite understand how their allegiance to Christ must relate to how they do their job, and to public justice.

But then the Manifesto asserts that that commitment "should not be limited to tribal or national boundaries, or be confused with, or reduced to political categories such as 'conservative' and 'liberal,' or to psychological categories such as 'reactionary' or 'progressive.'" That's easy to say but not easy make reality. When one is appalled – as all Christians should be – by the deaths of millions of unborn children (created by God) which are dismissed as the result of "women's right to choose," such a person is automatically branded a conservative. When one is disturbed – as all Christians should be – by the pollution and rapid destruction of wildlife habitat and waterways (created by God) so that more and more people can own second homes or live the "good life" with a view, such a person is quickly labeled a liberal.

The Manifesto counters the traditional, straitjacket categories when it asserts that commitment to Jesus Christ entails "innovation, renewal, reformation, and entrepreneurial dynamism, for everything in every age is subject to assessment in the light of Jesus and his World. The Evangelical principle is therefore a call to self-examination, reflection, and a willingness to be corrected and to change whenever necessary."

Reformed needed in every area

What, concretely, needs renewing the Manifesto lays out in a major section ***"We Must Reform Our Behavior."*** The list of sins is long and the cure may well be painful. No

Continued on page 18

Corinthians

Fulfillment and completion

When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him so that God may be all in all.

I Cor. 15:28

A.A. van Ruler

Here it is said of God that he will be all in all. That is the completion, the consummation, the kingdom of glory, God's future that is coming toward us and that we anticipate. Somewhere else (Eph. 1: 23) it is said of Christ that he is the fullness who fills everything (and everyone) in every way. That is the fulfillment, the kingdom of grace, the messianic "Now" in which we have been placed through the Son's coming and work. The text is about these two: fulfillment and completion, about the godly Future and the messianic Now, about God's kingdom, Christ's kingdom and their relationship. In our speaking about this we must be careful, because we are on slippery ground here. So, on the one hand, we must not seek to know more than what we are being told. But we must, on the other hand, allow the Bible to say all there is to say about it.

There is especially this: the fulfillment – of all things through Christ – happens totally in the Now. "Fulfillment" means that in the power of his resurrection he is present in all things. Indeed, he is so fully present, that he fills them and gives meaning to them and he completes them. By this presence of Christ all things have their meaning and all things work out. This holds true for *all* things: earth, universe, nature, history, state and culture, life and heart. Christ is Now, in the present, fully with us to insure the power of his salvation.

Present yet invisible

We should not say that we do not see much of that, for much of that will be revealed. Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies who are subjected at his feet – take note of the present tense! His is the rule of grace and mercy, of sacrifice and reconciliation. Thus, things are "Christian" on earth, i.e., in the way of Christ, his cross and resurrection. Thus, all things are reasonable, but according to the reasonableness of the cross. It is for that reason that it is hidden. Indeed, nothing of it is visible. Yet that all-encompassing presence of Christ is truly true. His presence is in the "flesh." In our godforsaken-ness he is with us.

The reality of his rule is a consolation that surpasses all understanding. But it also has another side to it: The completion happens so totally in the Now that nothing will be left of it in the future. Here we touch upon the hardest part of what Paul is saying to us. Once, when all things are subjected to him, when finally, finally Death itself will be subjected completely – that same Death, who even now, in spite of Christ's hidden rule, manages to rule over us so devastatingly. But when finally all is completed, then also the Son himself will submit to him who has subjected all things. The Son will then surrender again the kingship and return it to the Father (I Cor. 1:24) who had given it to the Son for a time. (Luke 22:29)

The completion is then complete and the consummation will then begin. Christ will then cease to fill everything in every way. Then God himself will be all in all. The incarnation of the Word will then, as it appears, be finished. In any case, no more hiding of God's lordship and glory in the flesh. We will then see God as God – openly. God will still rule, but no longer in grace and mercy, but in majesty and glory. Now, somehow, things are Christian on earth. But then they will be godly. All things will perish, even the gospel, the cross and Christendom.

The end of Christianity

There will no longer be anything left of Christ's mediation between God and the world. All creatures will be saved "immediately." No longer outside of themselves (grace) – in the completed work of Christ – but *in* themselves, in their own existence. Then they will be the unencumbered "glory of God." Then there will be no more revelation, no special revelation any more. No Holy Scriptures, no people of Israel, no Church, no Christians.

Then there will be only the created things, things that are saved. Existence rejoices in *itself.* And in that joy, there is God. Thus, God is all in all. Then there will be nothing separating God from the naked existence of his creatures. God will then dwell among his people, says the book of Revelation (Rev. 21: 3). Pure humanity will then be the pure image of God.

This is the opposite of pantheism. True, it sounds that way at first: God will be all in all. But if we listen keenly to what the Bible says, it turns out to be a mistake. The end of time is not the beginning of pantheism. No deifying will occur, not even through the incarnation of the Word. People sometimes say, "God has become human so that humankind could become God." But one can certainly not explain that in a pantheistic sense, as if God would, in the end, still revert to the devil's plan who said, "*You will become like God.*" (Gen. 3: 5).

Instead, there will be a radical purification. The dream of "being God" will no longer plague us. That, exactly, is the essence of deliverance, the liberation of the person: no longer to long for being like God or to long for becoming like him. It is for that that Jesus Christ died – once gain the creature will be *creature*.

And even that life in Christ, granted through Christ himself by the working of his Spirit, that strange life of hidden union with Christ, even that will be taken away. Spiritual life in its "separateness" will end and the "natural" will be saved.

Thus, subjection will happen in stages. First there will be subjection to Christ and deliverance from the pipe dream of being like God so that we no longer have God's life in us, but have our life in him. We will stop being God, but will become Christian, Christ-like. And then, there will be another subjection and that is the subjection of Christ and his people to God the Father. From then on we'll be free to give into God's own hands life and being God. From then on we will not want to be more than what we were from the beginning, *creature*. From then on we'll no longer be Christian, but simply *humankind* "as it was in the beginning."

Translated from the Dutch by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines, Ontario.

An Evangelical Manifesto ...continued from p. 17

words are minced, though each statement is preceded with "all too often," so as not to assume that every evangelical is guilty of everyone of these sins:

- replacing of biblical truths with therapeutic techniques, worship with entertainment, discipleship with growth in human potential, church growth with business entrepreneurialism, replacing the meeting of real needs with pandering to felt needs, and mission principles with marketing precepts;
- priding ourselves on our orthodoxy while living worldly lives conforming to the spirit of the age – carrying on our lives as if we have little practical need for God;
- falling into factions rather than demonstrating the unity and harmony of the Body of Christ;
- attacking the evils and injustices of others, such as the killing of the unborn, as well as the heresies and apostasies of theological liberals whose views have developed into 'another gospel,' while we have condoned our own sins, turned a blind eye to our own vices, and lived captive to forces such as materialism and consumerism in ways that contradict our faith";
- "switching from genuine community to an embrace of individualism, softening theological authority down to personal preference";
- failing to apply biblical truths to creation, becoming careless about the stewardship of the earth and "negligent of the arts and the creative centers of society";
- disobeying the Lord's great love command that should involve heart, soul mind, strength, falling into an "unbecoming anti-intellectualism that is a dire cultural handicap as well as a sin," resulting in some becoming vulnerable to "caricatures of the false hostility between science and faith";
- glorying in racial and ethnic diversity in church while being content to live in separate enclaves;
- abandoning the Lord's concern for those in the "shadows, twilight and deep darkness" of the world, becoming "cheerleaders" for those in power.

The list is longer still, but you get the idea. Clearly, restoration of the principle "always reforming" is in order and so the Manifesto calls for "deep reformation and renewal." It's not a particularly pleasant read when *you* are the subject of its critique. I find myself wondering how evangelicals have reacted to this document. (There's an accompanying study guide meant for use in evangelical churches.) I'll do a little research to see if I can find out. In my next column I'll look at that call to reformation as it relates to the culmination of the Manifesto: **rethinking our place in public life.**

The Manifesto's steering committee and signees, besides Rich Mouw, were Timothy George (Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University), Os Guinness (Author/Social Critic), John Huffman (Pastor, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach, Calif., and Chair, Christianity Today International), Jesse Miranda (Founder & Director, Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership, Vanguard University) David Neff (Vice President and Editor in Chief, Christianity Today Media Group) Richard Ohman (Businessman), Larry Ross (President, A. Larry Ross Communications), Dallas Willard (Author, Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern California).

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com*

Classifieds

Christmas Food Parcels

The Christmas season will soon be upon us and once again the Committee Netherlands Bazaar is depending on your co-operation to successfully identify those families who will receive a Christmas food parcel. If you know of any family of Dutch extraction in Ontario, in extreme financial circumstances, we need to hear from you before **Wednesday, November 12th, 2008.**

Please note that we must have specific information in order to send the appropriate food parcel, such as name(s) of recipient(s), address, contact person, ages of children, as well as the reason for aid. Also the telephone number of a contact person who can verify this nformation and the signature of the contact person are required. **All submitted names will be kept in strict confidence.**

Please forward information by November 12th, 2008 to **Mrs. G. Spaans, Committee "Netherlands Bazaar", 15 Pavillion Street, Unionville ON L3R 1N8.** Your assistance in reaching these Ontario families in real need is very much appreciated. Thank you for your ongoing support and co-operation.

Sincerely,
Ge Spaans

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Anniversaries

Trenton, ON 1958 October 10 2008 Welland, ON

With praise and thanks to God for his love and grace, we, the children and grandchildren of

FRANCIS AND MARY DEVRIES (nee **Zwart**)

are happy to announce their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on October 10, 2008.

Psalm 32:8 *I will instruct you and teach you*
in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.

Tricia & John Lammers – Justin, Mark, Ariel
Wilma & Andy Veldman – Andrew, Melodie, Carla, Peter, Paul
Teresa & Bert Wikkerink – Lydia, Anthony, Rueben, Nathan
Debbie & Ken DeVries – Esther, Hannah, Caleb, Joel

An **Open House** for friends and family will be held Saturday October 11 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at Grace CRC, 660 South Pelham Rd, Welland Ontario
Best wishes only please.

Home address: 409 Kleiner St RR 3, Wainfleet ON L0S 1V0

1958 October 3 2008

With thanksgiving to God

HARRY AND HELEN BROUWER (nee **DeJong**)

celebrated with their children and grandchildren their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on October 3rd, 2008.

Janette & Bernie Westervelt – Melissa, Alana, Kaylee, Braydon
Bernie & Linda Brouwer – Amanda, Danielle and Nicole
Rob & Betty Brouwer – Thomas and Kate
Carol & Al Schenk – Zach and Noah

Home address: Harry and Helen Brouwer
11986 River Line RR 6
Thamesville ON N0P 2K0

Strathroy, Ontario 1958 2008 Dresden, Ontario

In gratitude for God's faithfulness in their lives,

CHARLES AND JENNIE DEVRIES

will celebrate **50 years of Marriage** on October 8, 2008.

They will enjoy this occasion with their children and grandchildren:
Janet (predeceased)
Kathryn, *Chatham, Ont.*
Frederick, *Vancouver, B.C.*
Gregory & Jennifer Devries – Megan, *Dresden, Ont.*
Patricia & Robert Sluys – Alex, Abby, *Thamesville, Ont.*

All family members and friends are welcome to attend an **Open House** on Saturday, October 11, 2008 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at Dresden Christian Reformed Church, Dresden, Ont.
In lieu of gifts, donations to the Canadian Cancer Society will be received in remembrance of Janet.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15

Address: 11408 Baseline, Dresden ON N0P 1M0

With Praise to the Lord our God
We wish to announce the
50th Wedding Anniversary of

JOHN AND DERKTJE PONSEN

October 11, 2008

We give thanks to God for his many blessings in their lives.

Gloria & Ed Roorda
John (Dawn), Adrian, Steven, Corrina (Carl)
Andrew & Teresa Ponsen
Daniel, Felicia
Benjamin & Lori Ponsen
Harmony, Fayth, Rachael

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Events

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Sat. Oct. 25 in **Guelph**
at St. George's Anglican Church 7:30 p.m.

Rev. Brian Lise guest speaker. Special offering.

See you there. Call 1-866-630-6301

For more details and other concert dates, see Calendar of Events.

Classifieds

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REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE Monday, October 27

Registration starts at 9:30am with activities planned from 10:00am to 3:00pm

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"A Christian view of place for today"
by Dr Craig Bartholomew,
H. Evan Runner Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer University College

"Place is like the air we breath - we take it for granted until something alerts us to just how important it is. If you have moved countries or moved from one part of Canada to a very different part, say from Hamilton to Vancouver, you will know how place affects us all. My talk will explore place as God's gift to us and how we can honour him in our development of it, whether it be in our garden, a room in home, developing a college or building a mall"

AFTERNOON SESSION:
Musical Program

Guests will have an opportunity to meet with their grandchildren during the afternoon's coffee break.

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Job opportunities

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For further information, visit www.icscanada.edu/ics/jobs/

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The successful candidate will use her/his Christian leadership skills to mentor staff, students and volunteers; allow her/his vision to challenge the school community to grow spiritually and academically; have appropriate training and experience; and be committed to a reformed Christian worldview. Preference will be given to candidates who hold or are progressing towards a Christian School Principal Certificate.

An information package is available upon request. Information about RCHS is presented at www.rchs.on.ca. Interested applicants may send their résumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to **mmudde@primus.ca**.

Application deadline is 31 October 2008.

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Bethel Christian Reformed Church has served as the only Reformed church presence in the Saskatoon area for more than 50 years. Currently, the congregation is excited about the new building project which will much better accommodate the needs we have. The building is on the North end of Saskatoon just off a major highway with plenty of space to grow. Our congregation is diverse in Reformed backgrounds, age groups and careers and we pray for God's continued blessing also at our new location as we work together to be His light to the world.

Saskatoon is experiencing unprecedented growth and economic opportunities. If you are interested in exploring your family's options in Saskatoon, please email the links below.

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- Herdsman positions for large dairies available.
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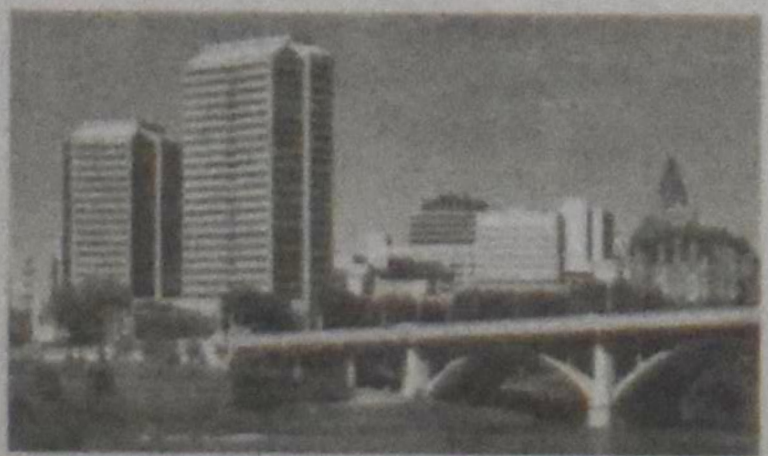

Send your questions or resumes to tooncity@gmail.com with your contact information and interests.

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We are a multi-generational church whose members are dedicated to outreach, and are looking for a dynamic, Bible-based preacher who also possesses pastoral strength to minister to individual members. The Church profile is available upon request.
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Emmanuel Home

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Telephone (780) 478-2051 Fax (780) 473-0970
email: news@emmanuelhome.ab.ca
website: www.emmanuelhome.ab.ca

Position Available:

Executive Director for Emmanuel Home

The Executive Director serves in an advisory capacity to the Board in determining decisions of policy and becomes the chief agent for carrying out these decisions and provides executive control of all the Christian Senior Citizens Homes Society of Northern Alberta, (Emmanuel Home) operations and activities.
Emmanuel Home is recruiting an Executive Director with the following qualifications &/or credentials to begin as soon as possible and will bring the following to this position:

1. A degree in health-care or business administration, humanities, education or a combination of education and experience in one of the relevant disciplines. Candidates with experience in the Service industry will be considered.
2. Commitment to the Mission and Vision of the Christian Senior Citizens Homes Society of Northern Alberta operating as Emmanuel Home. Must be a Christian and a member of the Society.
3. Interpersonal skills of sensitivity and compassion, as well as persuasive oral and written communication skills.

In addition the successful candidate shall have the following skills or a combination of knowledge or experience with:

1. Computers including Word, Excel, email, internet programs.
2. Financial management including contracts, budgets, staffing and Alberta Labour standards.
3. Construction industry as Emmanuel Home is preparing to expand with 54 new units.
4. Managing staffing and multiple programs.
5. Supportive Living Residents and/or knowledge of Alberta's Supportive Living Accommodation Standards.

Please reply with resume & references in writing to Gwyneth Pelster, Administrator Emmanuel Home, email gpelster@emmanuelhome.ab.ca or call 780-478-2051 for further information. Job description provided on request.

Dordt College
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Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

August, 2009

Biology Faculty
Teach botanical science and/or human biology courses fundamental to programs in Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry, and Health Science.

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

Sep 27 2008 Worldview Conference at Kings Christian Collegiate, 528 Burnhamthorpe Rd, **Oakville**, Ont. Info and registration at www.icscanada.edu/events.

Oct 4 Get Connected partnership Banquet hosted by CRC campus ministries, Uni. of Guelph & Uni. of Waterloo/Laurier. Banquet 6:30 - 9:00 at the Drayton CRC. Contact: Eve Mazereeuw emazereeuw@gmail.com or 519-827-1753.

Oct 5 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry De-Bolster will be preaching.

Oct 18 Day of Encouragement. An opportunity for all deacons, elders and church members to be encouraged, inspired and equipped for ministry. This event takes place at Hamilton District Christian High in **Ancaster**. Our theme is 'Walking in His Way'. 50 workshops await your registration. The cost is $55.00. Registration flyers and details are available at www.diaconalministries.com or call (905) 336-2920 for more information.

Oct. 22 Benefit Concert at 7:30 p.m. for Eurovangelism, with Rev. Brian Lise. Choir – Organ –Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. Admission Free. Collection Eurovangelism. Hebron CRC, 42040 Anderson Str. **Whitby**

Oct 25 Benefit Concert 7:30 p.m. for Eurovangelism, with Rev. Brian Lise. Choir – Organ –Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. Admission Free. Collection Eurovangelism St.George's Anglican Church. 99 Woolwich Street. **Guelph**

Nov 6 Organ recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (ARCCO) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at Trinity Anglican Church, **Cambridge**, 12:15 p.m. (wvan08@rogers.com)

Nov 8 The Lighthouse Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction, **Woodbridge,** ON. See ad this issue

Nov 8 Trillium Leaque Reunion (Ontario) If you were involved in Trillium League Youth during the years of 1975 and 1982, you are invited to reminisce & reconnect from 4-9 p.m. at Community CRC in **Kitchener**. For details go to www.trilliumleaguereunion.com or email Phia (Hoogendoorn) Howes at phia@sympatico.ca or call 519-699-5942.

Nov 19 Festive Concert, OCMA Come back. Choir – Organ – Panflute – Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. 7:30 p.m. Admission Adults: $20.00 under 12: $10.00 Georgetown CRC, 11611 Trafalger Rd., **Georgetown** ON. Phone OCMA at 416-636-9779

Nov 22 Festive Concert, OCMA Come back. Choir 7:30 p.m. – Organ – Panflute –Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. Admission Adults: $20.00 under 12: $10.00. Springdale CRC, 1466 5th Sideroad, **Bradford** ON Phone OCMA at 416-636-9779

Day of Encouragement

October 18

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See Calendar of Events for more details.

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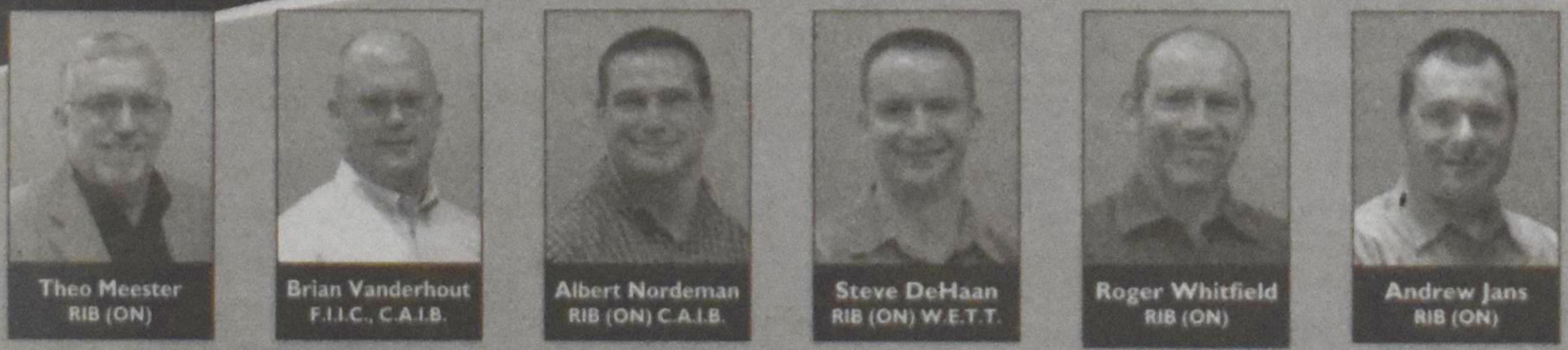

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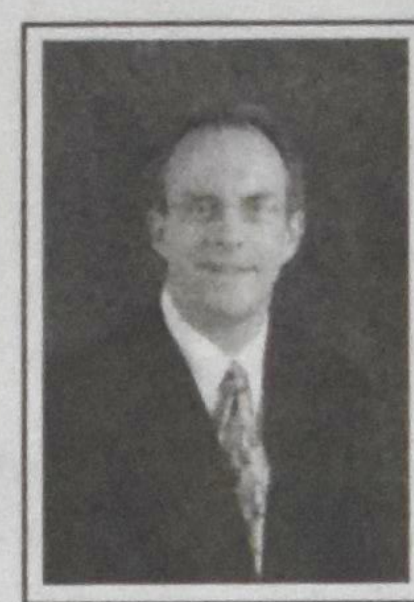

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News

World news bytes

"Thorough preparations" are under way to restart North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear reactor, the Foreign Ministry announced over the weekend. The plant, which produces weapons-grade plutonium, was being dismantled under the disarmament-for-aid agreement with five negotiating partners. But the North complains that the US hasn't removed it from a list of state sponsors of terrorism, thus failing on its end of the deal.

Israelis were expected to wake up to a changed political order after Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced he'd resign Sunday night. Olmert would remain in his post as caretaker until his successor, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, can form a new government. Reports said Livni already was meeting with prospective coalition partners.

Saying it was heeding the appeals of tribal elders and political leaders in Nigeria's oil-producing region, the leading militant group there announced an immediate new cease-fire. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta broke its previous truce Sept. 14 and declared an "oil war" in retaliation for an attack on one of its bases by Army troops. Over the past week, it claimed successful raids on pipelines, pumping stations, and soldiers guarding them. It said the new truce would last as long as it wasn't attacked again.

A large volume of helium has leaked into the tunnel holding the world's largest atom-smasher, putting it out of commission for at least two months, its operators said. The Large Hadron Collider deep under the French-Swiss border became headline news Sept. 10 when it successfully conducted its first two tests. The accident was the second to idle it since then.

Ten people were hurt and a police station was heavily damaged Sunday as suspected Basque separatists exploded powerful bombs in two cities in northern Spain. The first, outside a bank in the regional capital, Vitoria, followed a telephoned warning purportedly from the separatist organization ETA. No warning preceded the second blast, which targeted the police station in Ondarroa. The attacks came three days after a pro-independence Basque political party was banned for having ties to ETA.

Adding to China's tainted-milk scandal woes, a nightclub fire and two coal mining accidents killed at least 93 people and injured more than 80 others Saturday. The fire erupted in a three-story establishment popular with young people in Shenzen, near the border with Hong Kong, when burning Roman candles ignited ceiling tiles. As many as 1,000 panicked clubgoers stampeded for the exit. The mining accidents took place in Henan and Heilongjiang provinces and were the fourth and fifth to be reported this month.

A new threat arose Sunday to the fledgling unity government in Belgium – the withdrawal of Prime Minister Yves Leterme's Flemish coalition partner. The N-VA Party said it no longer could support him because it had lost confidence in his ability to find a solution to the thorny issue of devolving powers to the nation's French- and Dutch-speaking regions. Leaders from both sides had been expected to resume negotiations next month on dividing powers.

Assets of the Italian national airline, Alitalia, were expected to be put up for auction as soon as Monday, reports said. Barring an unforeseen new rescue offer for the bankrupt carrier, the civil aviation authority said its planes will be grounded within 10 days. Negotiations between a consortium of potential buyers and unions representing Alitalia employees broke down last week, although the umbrella Confederation of Labor argued that the government has a duty to broker a deal.

Compiled from wire service reports by Robert Kilbor,
Christian Science Monitor

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